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THE

WORKS

OF

PRESIDENT EDWARDS,

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOLUME VI.

CONTAINING,

I. SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE PRESENT REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN NEW ENGLAND.

II. FIVE DISCOURSES ON THE SOUL'S ETERNAL SALVATION.

III. TWO SERMONS.

IV. SEVEN SERMONS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

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SOME THOUGHTS

CONCERNING THE

PRESENT REVIVAL OF RELIGION

IN

NEW-ENGLAND,

AND THE

WAY IN WHICH IT OUGHT TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND PROMOTED;

HUMBLY OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC,

IN A TREATISE

ON THAT SUBJECT.

ISA. xl. 3.—PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE STRAIGHT IN THE DESERT A HIGH-WAY FOR OUR GOD.

1742

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THE

PREFACE.

IN the ensuing treatise, I condemn ministers assuming, or taking too much upon them, and appearing as though they supposed that they were the persons to whom it especially belonged to dictate, direct and determine; but perhaps shall be thought to be very guilty of it myself. And some, when they read this treatise, may be ready to say, that while I condemn this in others, I have the monopoly of it.——I confess that I have taken a great deal of liberty freely to express my thoughts concerning almost every thing appertaining to the wonderful work of God that has of late been carried on in the Land, and to declare what has appeared to me to be the mind of God concerning the duty and obligations of all sorts of persons, and even those that are my superiors and fathers, ministers of the gospel, and civil rulers. But yet I hope the liberty I have taken is not greater than can be justified. In a free nation, such liberty of the press is allowed, that every Author takes leave, without offence, freely to speak his opinion concerning the management of public affairs, and the duty of the legislature, and those that are at the head of the Administration, though vastly his superiors. As at this day, private subjects offer their sentiments to the public, from the press, concerning the management of the war with Spain; freely declaring what they think to be the duty of the Parliament, and the principal Ministers of State, &c. We in New-England are now engaged in a more important war. And I am sure, if we consider the sad jangling and confusion that has attended it, we shall confess that it is highly requisite some body should speak his mind, concerning the way in which it ought to be managed. Not only a few of the many particulars, which are the matter of strife should be debated, on the one side and the other, in pamphlets (as has of late been done, with heat and fierceness enough)—which do not tend to bring the contention in general to an end, but rather to inflame it, and increase the uproar—but something should be published to bring the affair in general, and the many things that attend it, which are the subjects of debate, under a particular consideration. And certainly it is high time that this was done. If private persons may speak their minds without arrogance; much more may a minister of the kingdom of Christ speak freely about things of this nature, which do so nearly concern the interest of the kingdom of his Lord and Master, at so important a juncture. If some elder minister had undertaken this, I acknow-

ledge it would have been more proper; but I have heard of no such thing like to be done. I hope therefore I shall be excused for undertaking such a work. I think that nothing I have said can justly be interpreted, as though I would impose my thoughts upon any, or did not suppose that others have equal right to think for themselves. We are not accountable one to another for our thoughts; but we must all give an account to him who searches our hearts, and has doubtless his eye especially upon us at such an extraordinary season as this. If I have well confirmed my opinion concerning this Work, and the way in which it should be acknowledged and promoted, with scripture and reason, I hope those who read it will receive it as a manifestation of the mind and will of God. If others would hold forth further light to me in any of these particulars, I hope I should thankfully receive it. I think I have been made in some measure sensible, and much more of late than formerly, of my need of more wisdom than I have. I make it my rule to lay hold of light and embrace it, wherever I see it, though held forth by a child or an enemy. If I have assumed too much in the following discourse, and have spoken in a manner that savours of a spirit of pride, no wonder that others can better discern it than I myself. If it be so, I ask pardon, and beg the prayers of every Christian reader, that I may have more light, humility and zeal; and that I may be favoured with such measures of the divine spirit, as a minister of the gospel stands in need of, at such an extraordinary season.

THOUGHTS ON THE REVIVAL, &c.

PART I.

SHEWING THAT THE EXTRAORDINARY WORK WHICH HAS OF LATE BEEN GOING ON IN THIS LAND, IS A GLORIOUS WORK OF GOD.

THE error of those who have had ill thoughts of the great religious operation on the minds of men, which has been carried on of late in *New-England*, (so far as the ground of such an error has been in the understanding, and not in the disposition) seems fundamentally to lie in three things; *First*, In judging of this work *a priori*. *Secondly*, In not taking the holy Scriptures as a whole Rule whereby to judge of such operations. *Thirdly*, In not justly separating and distinguishing the good from the bad.

SECT. I.

We should not judge of this Work by the supposed Causes, but by the Effects.

THEY have greatly erred in the way in which they have gone about to try this work, whether it be a work of the Spirit of God or no, *viz.* in judging of it *a priori;* from the way that it *began*, the *instruments* that have been employed, the *means* that have been used, and the methods that have been taken and succeeded, in carrying it on. Whereas, if we duly consider the matter, it will evidently appear that such a work is not to be judged of *a priori*, but *a posteriori*. We are to observe the *effect* wrought; and if, upon examination of that, it be found to be agreeable to the word of God, we are bound

to rest in it as God's work; and shall be like to be rebuked for our arrogance, if we refuse so to do till God shall explain to us how he has brought this effect to pass, or why he has made use of such and such means in doing it. Those texts are enough to cause us, with trembling, to forbear such a way of proceeding in judging of a work of God's spirit, Isa. xl. 13. 14. *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?* John iii. 8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.* We hear the sound, we perceive the effect, and from thence we judge that the wind does indeed blow; without waiting, before we pass this judgment, first to be satisfied what should be the cause of the wind's blowing from such a part of the heavens, and how it should come to pass that it should blow in such a manner, at such a time. To judge *a priori*, is a wrong way of judging of any of the works of God. We are not to resolve that we will first be satisfied how God brought this or the other effect to pass, and why he hath made it thus, or why it has pleased him to take such a course, and to use such and such means, before we will acknowledge his work, and give him the glory of it. This is too much for the *clay* to take upon it with respect to the *potter*. *God gives not account of his matters: His judgments are a great deep: He hath his way in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known; and who shall teach God knowledge, or enjoin him his way, or say unto him, What dost thou? We know not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so we know not the works of God who maketh all.* No wonder therefore if those that go this forbidden way to work, in judging of the present wonderful operation, are perplexed and confounded. We ought to take heed that we do not expose ourselves to the calamity of those who pried into the ark of God, when God mercifully returned it to *Israel*, after it had departed from them.

Indeed God has not taken that course, nor made use of those means, to begin and carry on this great work, which men in their wisdom would have thought most advisable, if he had asked their counsel; but quite the contrary. But it appears to me that the great God has wrought like himself, in the manner of his carrying on this work; so as very much to show his own glory, exalt his own sovereignty, power and all-

sufficiency. He has poured contempt on all that human strength, wisdom, prudence and sufficiency which men have been wont to trust, and to glory in; so as greatly to cross, rebuke and chastise the pride and other corruptions of men; Isa. ii. 17. *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.* God doth thus, in intermingling in his providence so many stumbling-blocks with this work; in suffering so much of human weakness and infirmity to appear; and in ordering so many things that are mysterious to men's wisdom: In pouring out his spirit chiefly on the common people, and bestowing his greatest and highest favours upon them, admitting them nearer to himself than the great, the honourable, the rich, and the learned; agreeable to that prophecy, Zech. xii. 7. *The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify themselves against Judah.* Those who dwelt in the tents of *Judah* were the common people, who dwelt in the country, and were of inferior rank. The inhabitants of *Jerusalem* were their citizens, their men of wealth and figure; and *Jerusalem* also was the chief place of the habitation or resort of their priests and levites, and their officers and judges; there sat the great *Sanhedrim.* The house of *David* were the highest rank of all, the royal family, and the great men about the king.——It is evident by the context, that this prophecy has respect to something further than saving the people out of the *Babylonish* captivity.

God in this work has begun at the lower end, and he has made use of the weak and foolish things of the world to carry it on. Some of the ministers chiefly employed, have been mere babes in age and standing; and some of them not so high in reputation among their brethren as many others; and God has suffered their infirmities to appear in the sight of others, so as much to displease them; and at the same time it has pleased God greatly to succeed them, while he has not so succeeded others who are generally reputed vastly their superiors. Yea, there is reason to think that it has pleased God to make use of the infirmities of some, particularly their imprudent zeal, and censorious spirit, to chastise the deadness, negligence, earthly-mindedness and vanity found among ministers in the late times of declension and deadness, wherein wise virgins and foolish, ministers and people, have sunk into a deep sleep. These things in ministers of the gospel, that go forth as the ambassaders of Christ, and have the care of immortal souls, are

extremely abominable to God; vastly more hateful in his sight than all the imprudence and intemperate heats, wildness and distraction (as some call it) of these zealous preachers. A supine carelesness, and a vain, carnal, worldly spirit in a minister of the gospel, is the worst madness and distraction in the sight of God. God may also make use at this day of the unchristian censoriousness of some preachers, the more to humble and purify some of his own children and true servants that have been wrongfully censured, to fit them for more eminent service and future honour.

SECT. II.

We should judge by the Rule of Scripture.

ANOTHER foundation-error of those who do not acknowledge the divinity of this work is, not taking the holy scriptures as *whole*, and in itself a sufficient rule to judge of such things by. They who have one certain consistent rule to judge by, are like to come to some clear determination; but they who have half a dozen different rules, instead of justly and clearly determining, do but perplex and darken themselves and others. They who would learn the true measure of any thing, and will have many different measures to try it by, have a task that they will not accomplish.—Those of whom I am speaking will indeed make some use of scripture, so far as they think it serves their turn, but do not make use of it *alone* as a rule sufficient by itself, but make as much and a great deal more use of other things, diverse and wide from it, by which to judge of this work. For,

I. Some make *Philosophy*, instead of the holy scriptures, their rule of judging of this work; particularly the philosophical notions thay entertain of the nature of the soul, its faculties and affections. Some are ready to say, "There is but little sober solid religion in this work; it is little else but flash and noise. Religion now all runs out into transports and high flights of the passions and affections." In their philosophy, the affections of the soul are something diverse from the will, and not appertaining to the noblest part of the soul. They are ranked among the meanest principles that belong to men as partaking of animal nature, and what he has in common with the brute creation, rather than any thing whereby he is conformed to angels and pure spirits. And though they acknow-

ledge that a good use may be made of the affections in religion, yet they suppose that the substantial part of religion does not consist in them, but that they are something adventitious and accidental in Christianity.

But these gentlemen, I cannot but think, labour under great mistakes, both in their philosophy and divinity. It is true, distinction must be made in the affections or passions. There is a great deal of difference in high and raised affections, which must be distinguished by the skill of the observer. Some are much more solid than others. There are many exercises of the affections that are very flashy, and little to be depended on; and oftentimes a great deal appertains to them, or rather is the effect of them, that has its seat in animal nature, and is very much owing to the constitution and frame of the body; and that which sometimes more especially obtains the name of passion, is nothing solid or substantial. But it is false philosophy to suppose this to be the case with all exercises of affection in the soul, or with all great and high affections; and false divinity to suppose that religious affections do not appertain to the substance and essence of Christianity. On the contrary, it seems to me that the very life and soul of all true religion consists in them.

I humbly conceive that the affections of the soul are not properly distinguished from the will, as though they were two faculties. All acts of the affections are in some sense acts of the will, and all the acts of the will are acts of the affections. All exercises of the will are, in some degree or other, exercises of the soul's appetition or aversion; or which is the same thing, of its love or hatred. The soul wills one thing rather than another, or chuses one thing rather than another, no otherwise than as it loves one thing more than another; but love and hatred are affections of the soul. Therefore all acts of the will are truly acts of the affections; though the exercises of the will do not obtain the name of passions, unless the will, either in its aversion or opposition, be exercised, in a high degree, or in a vigorous and lively manner. —All will allow that true virtue or holiness has its seat chiefly in the heart, rather than in the head. It therefore follows, from what has been said already, that it consists chiefly in holy *affections*. The things of religion take place in men's hearts, no further than they are *affected* with them. The informing of the understanding is all vain, any farther than it *affects* the heart, or, which is the same thing, has influence on the *affections*.

Those gentlemen, who make light of these raised affections

in religion, will doubtless allow that true religion and holiness, as it has its seat in the heart, is capable of very high degrees, and high exercises in the soul. For instance; they will probably allow, that the holiness of the heart or will is capable of being raised to a hundred times as great a degree of strength as it is in the most eminent saint on earth, or to be exerted in a hundred times so vigorous exercises of the heart; and yet be true religion or holiness still. Now therefore I would ask them, by what name they will call these high and vigorous exercises of the will or heart? Are they not high affections? What can they consist in, but in high acts of love; strong and vigorous exercises of benevolence and complacence; high, exalting and admiring thoughts of God and his perfections; strong desires after God, &c.?—And now, what are we come to but high and raised affections? yea, those very affections that before they objected against, as worthy of little regard?

All will allow that there is nothing but solid religion in heaven; but there, holiness is raised to an exceeding great height, to strong, high, exalted exercises of heart. Now, what other strong and high exercises of the heart, or of holiness as it has its seat in their hearts, can we devise for them, but holy affections, high degrees of actings of love to God, rejoicing in God, admiration of God, &c.?—Therefore these things in the saints and angels in heaven are not to be despised and cashiered by the name of great heats and transports of the passions.—And it will doubtless be yet further allowed, that the more eminent the saints are on earth, the stronger their grace, and the higher its exercises are, the more they are like the saints in heaven, *i. e.* (by what has been just now observed) the more they have of high or raised affections in religion.

Though there are false affections in religion, and in some respects raised high; yet undoubtedly there are also true, holy and solid affections; and the higher these are raised, the better. And, when they are raised to an exceeding great height, they are not to be suspected merely because of their degree, but on the contrary to be esteemed. Charity, or divine love, is in Scripture represented at the sum of all the religion of the heart; but this is only a holy *affection*. And therefore, in proportion as this is firmly fixed in the soul, and raised to a great height, the more eminent a person is in holiness. Divine love or charity is represented as the sum of all the religion of heaven, and that wherein mainly the religion of the church in its more perfect state on earth shall consist, when knowledge, and tongues, and prophesyings shall cease; and therefore the higher

this holy affection is raised in the church of God, or in a gracious soul, the more excellent and perfect is the state of the church, or a particular soul.

If we take the Scriptures for our rule, then the greater and higher our exercises of love to God, delight and complacency in him, desires and longings after him, delight in his children, love to mankind, brokenness of heart, abhorrence of sin, and self-abhorrence for it; the more we have of the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and joy in the Holy Ghost, unspeakable and full of glory; the higher our admiring thoughts of God, exulting and glorying in him; so much the higher is Christ's religion, or that virtue which he and his Apostles taught, raised in the soul.

It is a stumbling to some, that religious affections should seem to be so powerful, or that they should be so violent (as they express it) in some persons. They are therefore ready to doubt whether it can be the spirit of God; or, whether this vehemence be not rather a sign of the operation of an evil spirit. But why should such a doubt arise? What is represented in scripture as more powerful in its effects than the Spirit of God? which is therefore called *the power of the highest*, Luke i. 35. and its saving effect in the soul is called *the power of godliness*. So we read of the *demonstration of the spirit and of power*, 1 Cor. ii. 4. And it is said to operate in the minds of men with the *exceeding greatness of divine power*, and *according to the working of God's mighty power*, Eph. i. 19. So we read of *the effectual working of his power*, Eph. iii. 7. *the power that worketh in Christians*, v. 20. the *glorious power* of God in the operations of the Spirit, Col. i. 11. and *the work of faith*, wrought *with power*, 2 Thess. i. 11. In 2 Tim. i. 7. the Spirit of God is called *the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*.— So the spirit is represented by a mighty wind, and by fire, things most powerful in their operation.

II. Many are guilty of not taking the holy *scriptures* as a *sufficient* and *whole* rule, whereby to judge of this work. They judge by those things which the scripture does not give as any signs or marks whereby to judge one way or the other, *viz.* the effects that religious exercises and affections of mind have upon the body. Scripture-rules respect the state of the mind, moral conduct, and voluntary behaviour; and not the physical state of the body. The design of the scripture is to teach us divinity, and not physick and anatomy. Ministers are made the watchmen of mens souls, and not their bodies; and therefore the great rule which God has committed into

their hands, is to make them divines, and not physicians.—Christ knew what instructions and rules his church would stand in need of, better than we do; and, if he had seen it needful in order to the church's safety, he doubtless would have given to ministers rules for judging of bodily effects. He would have told them how the pulse should beat under such and such religious exercises of mind; when men should look pale, and when they should shed tears; when they should tremble, and whether or no they should ever be faint or cry out; or whether the body should ever be put into convulsions. He probably would have put some book into their hands, that should have tended to make them excellent anatomists and physicians. But he has not done it, because he did not see it to be needful.—He judged, that if ministers thoroughly did their duty as watchmen and overseers of the state and frame of mens souls, and of their voluntary conduct, according to the rules he had given, his church would be well provided for as to its safety in these matters. And therefore those ministers of Christ, and overseers of souls, who are full of concern about the involuntary motions of the fluids and solids of mens bodies, and who from thence are full of doubts and suspicions of the cause—when nothing appears but that the state and frame of their minds, and their voluntary behaviour is good, and agreeable to God's word—go out of the place that Christ has set them in, and leave their proper business, as much as if they should undertake to tell who are under the influence of the spirit by their looks, or their gait. I cannot see which way we are in danger, or how the devil is like to get any notable advantage against us, if we do but thoroughly do our duty with respect to those two things, viz. the state of persons *minds*, and their moral *conduct*; seeing to it that they be maintained in an agreeableness to the rules that Christ has given us. If things are but kept right in these respects, our fears and suspicions arising from extraordinary bodily effects seem wholly groundless.

The most specious thing alledged against these extraordinary effects, on the body, is, That the body is impaired, and that it is hard to think that God, in the merciful influences of his spirit on men, would wound their bodies, and impair their health. But if it were in multiplied instances (which I do not suppose it is) that persons received a lasting wound to their health by extraordinary religious impressions made upon their minds, yet it is too much for us to determine that God shall never bring an outward calamity, in bestowing a vastly greater

spiritual and eternal good. *Jacob* in doing his duty in wrestling with God for the blessing, and even at the same time that he received the blessing from God, suffered a great outward calamity from his hand. God gave him the blessing, but sent him away halting on his thigh, and he went lame all his life after. And yet this is not mentioned as if it were any diminution of the great mercy of God to him, when God blessed him, and he received his name *Israel*, because as a prince he had power with God, and had prevailed.

But, say some, The operations of the Spirit of God are of a benign nature; nothing is of a more kind influence on human nature than the merciful breathings of God's own Spirit. But it has been generally supposed and allowed in the church of God, till now, that there is such a thing as being sick of love to Christ, or having the bodily strength weakened by strong and vigorous exercises of love to him. And however kind to human nature the influences of the Spirit of God are, yet nobody doubts but that divine and eternal things, as they may be discovered, would overpower the nature of man in its present weak state; and that therefore the body, in its present weakness, is not fitted for the views, and pleasures, and employments of heaven. Were God to discover but a little of that which is seen by saints and angels in heaven, our frail natures would sink under it. Let us rationally consider what we profess to believe of the infinite greatness of divine wrath, divine glory, the divine infinite love and grace in Jesus Christ, and the infinite importance of eternal things; and then how reasonable it is to suppose, that if God a little withdraw the vail, to let light into the soul—and give a view of the great things of another world in their transcendent and infinite greatness—that human nature, which is as the grass, a shaking leaf, a weak withering flower, should totter under such a discovery? Such a bubble is too weak to bear a weight so vast. Alas! what is man that he should support himself under a view of the awful wrath or infinite glory and love of JEHOVAH! No wonder therefore that it is said, *No man can see me and live;* and, *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* That external glory and majesty of Christ which Daniel saw, when *there remained no strength in him, and his comliness was turned in him into corruption,* Dan. x. 6—8. and which the apostle John saw, when he fell at his feet as dead; was but a shadow of that spiritual majesty of Christ which will be manifested in the souls of the saints in another world, and which is sometimes, in a degree, manifested to the soul in this world. And

if beholding the image of this glory did so overpower human nature, is it unreasonable to suppose that a sight of the spiritual glory itself, should have as powerful an effect? The prophet Habakkuk, speaking of the awful manifestations God made of his majesty and wrath, at the red-sea, and in the wilderness, and at mount Sinai, where he gave the law; and of the merciful influence, and strong impression God caused it to have upon him, to the end that he might be saved from that wrath, and rest in the day of trouble; says, Hab. iii. 16. *When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble.* This is an effect similar to what the discovery of the same majesty and wrath has had upon many in these days; and to the same purposes, viz. to give them rest in the day of trouble, and save them from that wrath. The Psalmist also speaks of such an effect as I have often seen on persons under religious affections of late, Psal. cxix. 131.

God is pleased sometimes, in dealing forth spiritual blessings to his people, in some respect to exceed the capacity of the vessel in its present scantiness; so that he not only fills it, but makes their *cup to run over;* (Psal. xxiii. 5.) and pours out a blessing, sometimes, in such a manner and measure that there is not room enough to receive it. (Mal. iii. 10.) He gives them riches more than they can carry away; as he did to Jehoshaphat and his people in a time of great favour, by the word of his prophet Jahaziel in answer to earnest prayer, when the people blessed the Lord in the valley of Berachah, 2 Chron. xx. 25, 26. It has been with the disciples of Christ, for a long season, a time of great emptiness on spiritual accounts. They have gone hungry, and have been toiling in vain, during a dark night with the church of God; as it was with the disciples of old, when they had toiled all night for something to eat, and caught nothing, Luke v. 5. and John xxi. 3. But now, the morning being come, Jesus appears to his disciples, and takes a compassionate notice of their wants, and says to them, *children, have ye any meat?* and gives some of them such abundance of food, that they are not able to draw their net; yea, so that their net breaks, and their vessel is overloaded, and begins to sink; as it was with the disciples of old, Luke v. 6, 7. and John xxi. 6.

We cannot determine that God never shall give any person so much of a discovery of himself, not only as to weaken their bodies, but to take away their lives. It is supposed by

very learned and judicious divines, that Moses life was taken away after this manner; and this has also been supposed to be the case with some other saints. Yea, I do not see any solid sure grounds any have to determine, that God shall never make such strong impressions on the mind by his spirit, that shall be an occasion of so impairing the frame of the body, that persons shall be deprived of the use of reason. As I said before, it is too much for us to determine, that God will not bring an outward calamity in bestowing spiritual and eternal blessings; so it is too much for us to determine how great an outward calamity he will bring. If God gives a great increase of discoveries of himself, and of love to him, the benefit is infinitely greater than the calamity, though the life should presently after be taken away; yea, though the soul should lie for years in a deep sleep, and then be taken to heaven: or, which is much the same thing, if it be deprived of the use of its faculties, and be as inactive and unserviceable, as if it lay in a deep sleep for some years, and then should pass into glory. We cannot determine how great a calamity distraction is, considered with all its consequences; and all that might have been consequent if the distraction had not happened; nor indeed whether, thus considered, it be any calamity at all, or whether it be not a mercy, by preventing some great sin, &c. It is a great fault in us to limit a sovereign all-wise God, whose judgments are a great deep, and his ways past finding out, where he has not limited himself, and in things concerning which he has not told us what his way shall be. It is remarkable, considering in what multitudes of instances, and to how great a degree, the frame of the body has been overpowered of late, that persons lives have notwithstanding been preserved. The instances of those who have been deprived of reason, have been very few, and those, perhaps all of them, persons under the peculiar disadvantage of a weak, vapoury habit of body. A merciful and careful divine hand is very manifest in it, that the ship, though in so many instances it has begun to sink, yet has been upheld, and has not totally sunk. The instances of such as have been deprived of reason are so few, that certainly they are not enough to cause alarm, as though this work was like to be of baneful influence; unless we are disposed to gather up all that we can to darken it, and set it forth in frightful colours.

There is one particular kind of exercise by which many have been overpowered, that has been especially stumbling to some; and that is, their deep distress for the souls of others.

I am sorry that any put us to the trouble of defending such a thing as this. It seems like mere trifling in so plain a case, to enter into a particular debate, in order to determine whether there be any thing in the greatness and importance in the case that will bear a proportion to the greatness of the concern manifested. Men may be allowed, from no higher a principle than common humanity, to be very deeply concerned, and greatly exercised in mind, at seeing others in great danger of, or being burnt up in a house on fire. And it will be allowed to be equally reasonable, if they saw them in danger of a calamity ten times greater, to be still much more concerned; and so much more still, if the calamity was still vastly greater. Why then should it be thought unreasonable, and looked on with a suspicious eye, as if it must come from some bad cause, when persons are extremely concerned at seeing others in a very great danger of suffering the fierceness and wrath of almighty God to all eternity? Besides, it will doubtless be allowed that those who have great degrees of the spirit of God, which is a spirit of love, may well be supposed to have vastly more love and compassion to their fellow-creatures, than those who are influenced only by common humanity. Why should it be thought strange that those who are full of the spirit of Christ, should be proportionably, in their love to souls, like to Christ? He had so strong a love and concern for them, as to be willing to drink the dregs of the cup of God's fury; and, at the same time that he offered up his blood for souls, he offered up also, as their high priest, strong crying and tears, with an extreme agony, wherein the soul of Christ was as it were in travail for the souls of the elect; and therefore, in saving them, he is said to see of the *travail* of his soul. As such a spirit of love and concern for souls was the spirit of Christ, so it is that of the church. Therefore the church, in desiring and seeking that Christ might be brought forth in the souls of men, is represented, Rev. xii. as a *woman crying, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.* The spirit of those who have been in distress for the souls of others, so far as I can discern, seems not to be different from that of the Apostle, who travailed for souls, and was ready to *wish himself accursed from Christ*, for others; and that of the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 53. *Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law*, And v. 136. *Rivers of waters ran down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.* And that of the Prophet *Jeremiah.* Jer. iv. 19. *My bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart! my heart maketh a noise in me! I cannot hold my peace! be-*

cause thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war! And so chap. ix. 1. and xiii. 17. xiv. 17. and Isa. xvii. 4. We read of *Mordecai*, when he saw his people in danger of being destroyed with a temporal destruction, Esth. iv. 1. that *he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out in the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry.* And why then should persons be thought to be distracted, when they cannot forbear crying out, at the consideration of the misery of those who are going to eternal destruction.

III. Another thing that some make their rule to judge of this work by, instead of the holy Scriptures, is *history*, or former observation. Herein they err two ways;

First, If there be any thing extraordinary in the circumstances of this work, which was not observed in former times, theirs is a rule to reject this work which God has not given them, and they limit God, where he has not limited himself. And this is especially unreasonable in this case: For whosoever has well weighed the wonderful and mysterious methods of divine wisdom in carrying on the work of the new creation—or in the progress of the work of redemption, from the first promise of the seed of the woman to this time—may easily observe that it has all along been God's manner to open new scenes, and to bring forth to view things new and wonderful—such as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man or angels—to the astonishment of heaven and earth, not only in the revelations he makes of his mind and will, but also in the works of his hands. As the old creation was carried on through six days, and appeared all complete, settled in a state of rest, on the seventh; so the new creation, which is immensely the greatest and most glorious work, is carried on in a gradual progress, from the fall of man, to the consummation of all things. And as in the progress of the old creation, there were still new things accomplished; new wonders every day in the sight of the angels, the spectators of that work—while those morning-stars sang together, new scenes were opened, till the whole was finished—so it is in the progress of the new creation. So that that promise, Isa. lxiv. 4. *For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.* Though it had a glorious fulfilment in the days of Christ and his Apostles, as the words are applied, 1 Cor. ii. 9. yet it always remains to be fulfilled, in things that

are yet behind, till the new creation is finished, as Christ's delivering up the kingdom to the father. And we live in those latter days, wherein we may be especially warranted to expect that things will be accomplished, concerning which it will be said, *Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things?*

Besides, those things in this work, which have been chiefly complained of as new, are not so new as has been generally imagined. Though they have been much more frequent lately, in proportion to the uncommon degree, extent, and swiftness, and other extraordinary circumstances of the work, yet they are not *new* in their kind; but are of the same nature as have been found, and well approved of, in the church of God before, from time to time.—We have a remarkable instance in Mr. *Bolton*, that noted minister of the church of *England*, who after being awakened by the preaching of the famous Mr. *Perkin*, Minister of Christ in the University of *Cambridge*, was the subject of such terrors as threw him to the ground, and caused him to roar with anguish. The pangs of the new-birth in him were such, that he lay pale and without sense, like one dead; as we have an account in the *fulfilment of the Scripture*, the 5th edition, p. 103, 104. We have an account in the same page of another, whose comforts under the sun-shine of God's presence were so great, that he could not forbear crying out in a transport, and expressing in exclamations the great sense he had of forgiving mercy and his assurance of God's love. And we have a remarkable instance, in the life of Mr. *George Trosse* written by himself (who, of a notoriously vicious profligate liver, became an eminent saint and minister of the gospel) of terrors occasioned by awakenings of conscience, so overpowering the body, as to deprive him, for some time, of the use of reason.

Yea, such extraordinary external effects of inward impressions have not been found merely in here and there a single person, but there have been times wherein many have been thus affected, in some particular parts of the church of God; and such effects have appeared in congregations, in many at once. So it was in the year 1625, in the west of *Scotland*, on a time of great outpouring of the spirit of God. It was then a frequent thing for many to be so extraordinarily seized with terror in hearing the word, by the spirit of God convincing them of sin, that they fell down, and were carried out of the church, and they afterwards proved most solid and lively Christians; as the author of the *fulfilling of the Scripture* informs us, p. 185.

The same author in the preceding page, informs of many in *France* that were so wonderfully affected with the preaching of the gospel, in the time of those famous divines *Farel* and *Viret*, that for a time they could not follow their secular business: And, p. 186. of many in *Ireland*, in a time of great outpouring of the spirit there, in the year 1623, that were so filled with divine comforts, and a sense of God, that they made but little use of either meat, drink or sleep; and professed that they did not feel the need thereof. The same author gives a similar account of Mrs. *Katharine Brettergh*, of *Lancashire*, in *England:* (p. 391, 392.) After great distress, which very much affected her body, God did so break in upon her mind with light and discoveries of himself, that she was forced to burst out, crying, "O the joys, the joys, the joys that I feel in my soul! O they be wonderful, they be wonderful! The place where I now am is sweet and pleasant! How comfortable is the sweetness I feel, that delights my soul! The taste is precious; do you not feel it? Oh so sweet as it is!" And at other times, "O my sweet Saviour, shall I be one with thee, as thou art one with the Father? And dost thou so love me that am but dust, to make me partaker of glory with Christ? O how wonderful is thy love? And Oh that my tongue and heart were able to sound forth thy praises as I ought!" At another time she burst forth thus; "Yea, Lord, I feel thy mercy, and I am assured of thy love! And so certain am I thereof, as thou art that God of truth; even so certainly do I know myself to be thine, O Lord my God; and this my soul knoweth right well!" Which last words she again doubled. To a grave minister, one Mr. *Harrison*, then with her, she said, "My soul hath been compassed with the terrors of death, the sorrows of hell were upon me, and a wilderness of woe was in me; but blessed, blessed, blessed be the Lord my God! he hath brought me to a place of rest, even to the sweet running waters of life. The way I now go in is a sweet and easy way, strowed with flowers; he hath brought me into a place more sweet than the garden of *Eden*, O the joy, the joy, the delights and joy that I feel! O how wonderful!"

Great outcries under awaknings were more frequently heard of in former times in the country than they have been of late, as some aged persons now living do testify: particularly I think fit here to insert a testimony of my honoured Father, of what he remembers formerly to have heard.—"I well remember that one Mr. *Alexander Allen*, a *Scots* gentleman of good credit, that dwelt formerly in this town, shewed me a letter

that came from *Scotland*, that gave an account of a sermon preached in the city of *Edinburgh* (as I remember) in the time of the sitting of the general assembly of divines in that kingdom, that so affected the people, that there was a great and loud cry made throughout the assembly. I have also been credibly informed, and how often I cannot now say, that it was a common thing, when the famous Mr. *John Rogers* of *Dedham*, in *England*, was preaching, for some of his hearers to cry out; and, by what I have heard, I conclude that it was usual for many that heard that very awakening and rousing preacher of God's word, to make a great cry in the congregation."

(Signed) TIMOTHY EDWARDS.

Windsor, May 5, 1742.

Mr. *Flavel* gives a remarkable instance of a man whom he knew, that was wonderfully overcome with divine comforts; which it is supposed he knew, as the Apostle *Paul* knew the man that was caught up to the third heaven. He relates, that "As the person was travelling alone, with his thoughts closely fixed on the great and astonishing things of another world, his thoughts began to swell higher and higher, like the water in *Ezekiel's* vision, till at last they became an overflowing flood. Such was the intenseness of his mind, such the ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, and such his full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost all sight and sense of this world, and the concernments thereof; and for some hours knew not where he was, nor what he was about; But, having lost a great quantity of blood at the nose, he found himself so faint, that it brought him a little more to himself. And after he had washed himself at a spring, and drank of the water for his refreshment, he continued to the end of his journey, which was thirty miles; and all this while was scarce sensible: And says, he had several trances of considerable continuance. The same blessed frame was preserved all that night, and, in a lower degree, great part of the next day; The night passed without one wink of sleep; and yet he declares he never had a sweeter night's rest in all his life. Still, *adds the story*, the joy of the Lord overflowed him, and he seemed to be an inhabitant of another world. And he used for many years after to call that day one of the days of heaven; and professed that he understood more of the life of heaven by it, than by all the books he ever read, or discourses he ever entertained about it."

There have been instances before now, of persons crying out in transports of divine joy in *New-England*. We have an

instance in Capt. *Clap's* memoirs, (published by the Rev. Mr. *Prince*,) not of a silly woman or child, but a man of solid understanding, that, in a high transport of spiritual joy, was made to cry out aloud on his bed. His words, p. 9. are, "God's holy spirit did witness (I do believe) together with my spirit, that I was a child of God; and did fill my heart and soul with such full assurance that Christ was mine, that it did so transport me, as to make me cry out upon my bed, with a loud voice, *He is come, he is come!*"

There has, before now, been both crying out and falling, even in this town, under awakenings of conscience, and in the pangs of the new-birth; and also in one of the neighbouring towns, more than seven years ago, a great number together cried out and fell down under conviction; and in most of whom there was an abiding good issue. And the Rev. Mr. *Williams* of *Deerfield* gave me an account of an aged man in that town, many years before that, who being awakened by his preaching, cried out aloud in the congregation. There have been many instances, before now, of persons in this town fainting with joyful discoveries made to their souls, and once several together. And there have been several instances here of persons waxing cold and benummed with their hands clinched, yea, and their bodies in convulsions, being overpowered with a strong sense of the astonishingly great and excellent things of God and the eternal world.

Secondly, Another way that some err in making history and former observation their rule instead of the holy scripture, is in comparing some external, accidental circumstances of this work, with what has appeared sometimes in enthusiasts. They find an agreement in some such things, and so they reject the whole work, or at least the substance of it, concluding it to be enthusiasm. Great use has been made to this purpose of many things that are found amongst the *Quakers*; however totally and essentially different in its nature this work is, and the principles upon which it is built, from the whole religion of the *Quakers*. To the same purpose, some external appearances that were found amongst the *French Prophets*, and other enthusiasts in former times, have been of late trumped up with great assurance and triumph.

IV. I would propose it to be considered, whether or no some, instead of making the Scriptures their only rule to judge of this work, do not make their own *experience* the rule, and reject such and such things as are now professed and experienced, because they themselves never felt them. Are there not

many, who, chiefly on this ground, have entertained and vented suspicions, if not peremptory condemnations, of those extreme terrors, and those great, sudden and extraordinary discoveries of the glorious perfections of God, and of the beauty and love of Christ? Have they not condemned such vehement affections, such high transports of love and joy, such pity and distress for the souls of others, and exercises of mind that have such great effects, merely, or chiefly, because they knew nothing about them by experience? Persons are very ready to be suspicious of what they have not felt themselves. It is to be feared that many good men have been guilty of this error; which however does not make it the less unreasonable. And perhaps there are some who upon this ground do not only reject these extraordinary things, but all such conviction of sin, discoveries of the glory of God, excellency of Christ, and inward conviction of the truth of the gospel, by the immediate influence of the spirit of God, now supposed to be necessary to salvation.—These persons who thus make their own experiences their rule of judgment, instead of bowing to the wisdom of God and yielding to his word as an infallible rule, are guilty of casting a great reflection upon the understanding of the Most High.

SECT. III.

We should distinguish the Good from the Bad, and not judge of the Whole by a Part.

Another foundation-error of those who reject this work, is, their not duly distinguishing the good from the bad, and very unjustly judging of the whole by a part; and so rejecting the work in general, or in the main substance of it, for the sake of some accidental evil in it. They look for more in men because subject to the operations of a good spirit, than is justly to be expected from them for that reason, in this imperfect state, where so much blindness and corruption remains in the best. When any profess to have received light and comforts from heaven, and to have had sensible communion with God, many are ready to expect that now they appear like angels, and not still like poor, feeble, blind and sinful worms of the dust. There being so much corruption left in the hearts of God's own children, and its prevailing as it sometimes does, is indeed a mysterious thing, and always was a stumbling-block to the world;

but will not be so much wondered at by those who are well versed in, and duly mindful of, two things, *viz. First*, The word of God, which teaches the state of true Christians in this world; and, *Secondly*, Their own hearts, at least if they have any grace, and have experience of its conflicts with corruption. True saints are the most inexcusable, in making a great difficulty of much blindness and many sinful errors in those who profess godliness. If all our conduct, both open and secret, should be known, and our hearts laid open to the world; how should we be even ready to flee from the light of the sun, and hide ourselves from the view of mankind! And what great allowances would we need that others should make for us? Perhaps much greater than we are willing to make for others.

The great weakness of the greater part of mankind, in any affair that is new and uncommon, appears in not distinguishing, but either approving or condemning all in the lump. They who highly approve of the affair in general, cannot bear to have any thing at all found fault with; and, on the other hand, those who fasten their eyes upon some things in the affair that are amiss, and appear very disagreeable to them, at once reject the whole. Both which errors oftentimes arise from the want of persons having a due acquaintance with themselves. It is rash and unjust when we proceed thus in judging either of a particular person, or a people. Many if they see any thing very ill in a particular person, a minister or private professor, will at once brand him as a hypocrite. And, if there be two or three of a people or society that behave themselves very irregularly, the whole must bear the blame of it. And if there be a few, though it may be not above one in a hundred, that professed, and had a shew of being the happy partakers of what are called the saving benefits of this work, but afterward give the world just grounds to suspect them, the whole work must be rejected on their account; and those in general, that make the like profession, must be condemned for their sakes.

So careful are some persons lest this work should be defended, that now they will hardly allow that the influences of the spirit of God on the heart can so much as indirectly, and *accidentally*, be the occasion of the exercise of corruption, and the commission of sin. Thus far is true, that the influence of the spirit of God in his *saving* operations will not be an occasion of increasing the corruption of the heart in general; but on the contrary of weakning it: but yet there is nothing unreasonable in supposing, that, at the same time that it weakens corruption in general, it may be an occasion of turning what is

left into a new channel. There may be more of some kinds of the exercise of corruption than before; as that which tends to stop the course of a stream, if it do it not wholly, may give a new course to so much of the water as gets by the obstacle. The influences of the spirit, for instance, may be an occasion of new ways of the exercise of *pride*, as has been acknowledged by orthodox divines in general. That spiritual discoveries and comforts may, through the corruption of the heart, be an occasion of the exercise of spiritual pride, was not used to be doubted, till now it is found to be needful to maintain the war against this work.

They who will hardly allow that a work of the spirit of God can be a remote occasion of any sinful behaviour or unchristian conduct, I suppose will allow that the truly gracious influences of the spirit of God, yea, and a high degree of love to God is consistent with these two things, viz. a considerable degree of remaining corruption, and also many errors in judgment in matters of religion. And this is all that need to be allowed, in order to its being most demonstratively evident, that a high degree of love to God may *accidentally* move a person to that which is very contrary to the mind and will of God. For a high degree of love to God will strongly move a person to do that which he believes to be agreeable to God's will; and therefore, if he be mistaken, and be persuaded that that is agreeable to the will of God, which indeed is very contrary to it, then his love will accidentally, but strongly, incline him to that, which is indeed very contrary to the will of God.—They who are studied in logic have learned, that the *nature* of the cause is not to be judged of by the nature of the effect, nor the nature of the effect from the nature of the cause, when the cause is only *causa sine qua non*, or an occasional cause; yea, that, in such a case, oftentimes the nature of the effect is quite contrary to the nature of the cause.

True disciples of Christ may have a great deal of false zeal, such as the disciples had of old, when they would have fire called for from heaven to come down on the *Samaritans*, because they did not receive them. And even so eminently holy, and great, and divine a saint as *Moses*—who conversed with God as a man speaks with his friend, and concerning whom God gives his testimony, that he *was very meek, above any man upon the face of the earth*—may be rash and sinful in his zeal, when his spirit is stirred by the hard-heartedness and opposition of others. He may speak very unadvisedly with his lips, and greatly offend God, and shut himself out from the

possession of the good things that God is about to accomplish for his church on earth; as Moses was excluded Canaan, though he had brought the people out of Egypt, Psal. cvi. 32, 33. And men, even in those very things wherein they are influenced by a truly pious principle, may through error and want of due consideration and caution, be very rash with their zeal. It was a truly good spirit which animated that excellent generation of Israel in Joshua's time; Josh. xxii. and yet they were rash and heady with their zeal, to gather all Israel together to go so furiously to war with their brethren of the two tribes and half, about their building the altar *Ed*, without first enquiring into the matter, or so much as sending a messenger to be informed. So the Christians of the circumcision, with warmth and contention condemned Peter for receiving Cornelius, Acts xi. This their heat and censure was unjust, and Peter was wronged in it; but there is every appearance in the story, that they acted from a real zeal and concern for the will and honour of God. So the primitive Christians, from their zeal for, and against unclean meats, censured and condemned one another. This was a bad effect, and yet the apostle bears them witness, or at least expresses his charity towards them, that both sides acted from a good principle, and true respect to the Lord, Rom. xiv 6. The zeal of the Corinthians with respect to the incestuous man, though the apostle highly commends it, yet at the same time saw that they needed a caution, lest they should carry it too far, to an undue severity, so as to fail of Christian meekness and forgiveness, 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. and chapter vii. 11. to the end.——Luther, that great reformer, had a great deal of bitterness with his zeal.

It surely cannot be wondered at by considerate persons, when multitudes all over the land have their affections greatly moved, that great numbers should run into many errors and mistakes with respect to their duty, and consequently, into many practices that are imprudent and irregular. I question whether there be a man in *New-England*, of the strongest reason and greatest learning, but what would be put to it to keep master of himself, thoroughly to weigh his words, and to consider all the consequences of his behaviour, so as to conduct himself in all respects prudently, if he were so strongly impressed with a sense of divine and eternal things, and his affections so exceedingly moved, as has been frequent of late among the common people. How little do they consider human nature, who look upon it so insuperable a stumbling

block, when such multitudes of all kinds of capacities, natural tempers, educations, customs and manners of life, are so greatly and variously affected, that imprudences and irregularities of conduct should abound; especially in a state of things so uncommon, and when the degree, extent, swiftness and power of the operation is so very extraordinary, and so new, that there has not been time and experience enough to give birth to rules for people's conduct, and the writings of divines do not afford rules to direct us in such a state of things?

A great deal of noise and tumult, confusion and uproar, darkness mixed with light, and evil with good, is always to be expected in the beginning of something very glorious in the state of things in human society, or the church of God. After nature has long been shut up in a cold dead state, when the sun returns in the spring, there is, together with the increase of the light and heat of the sun, very tempestuous weather, before all is settled calm and serene, and all nature rejoices in its bloom and beauty. It is in the new creation as it was in the old; the Spirit of God first moved upon the face of the waters, which was an occasion of great uproar and tumult. Things were then gradually brought to a settled state, till at length all stood forth in that beautiful peaceful order, when the heavens and the earth were finished, and God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. When God is about to bring to pass something great and glorious in the world, nature is in a ferment and struggle, and the world as it were in travail. When God was about to introduce the *Messiah* into the world, and a new, glorious dispensation, he *shook the heavens and the earth*, and he *shook all nations*. There is nothing that the church of God is in scripture more frequently represented by than vegetables; as a tree, a vine, corn, &c. which gradually bring forth their fruit, and are first green before they are ripe. A great revival of religion is expressly compared to this gradual production of vegetables, Isa. lxi. 11. *As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.* The church is in a special manner compared to a palm-tree, (Cant. vii. 7, 8. Exod. xv. 27. 1 Kings vi. 29. Psal. xcii. 12.) of which it is observed, That the fruit of it, though very sweet and good when ripe, has while unripe, a mixture of poison.

The weakness of human nature has always appeared in times of great revival of religion, by a disposition to run to

extremes, and get into confusion; and especially in these three things, enthusiasm, superstition, and intemperate zeal. So it appeared in the time of the reformation very remarkably, and even in the days of the apostles. Many were exceedingly disposed to lay weight on those things that were very chimerical, giving heed to fables, (1 Tim. i. 4. and iv. 7. 2 Tim. ii. 16. and *v.* 23. and Tit. i. 14. and iii. 9.) Many, as ecclesiastical history informs us, fell off into the most wild enthusiasm, and extravagant notions of spirituality, and extraordinary illumination from heaven beyond others; and many were prone to superstition, will-worship and a voluntary humility, giving heed to the commandments of men, being fond of an unprofitable bodily exercise, as appears by many passages in the apostles writings. And what a proneness then appeared among professors to swerve from the path of duty, and the spirit of the gospel, in the exercises of a rash indiscreet zeal, censuring and condemning ministers and people; one saying, I am of *Paul;* another, I am of *Apollos;* another, I am of *Cephas.*— They judged one another for differences of opinion about smaller matters, unclean meats, holy days and holy places, and their different opinions and practices respecting civil intercourse and communication with their heathen neighbours. And how much did vain jangling, disputing and confusion prevail, through undue heat of spirit, under the name of a religious zeal? (2 Tim. vi. 4, 5. 2 Tim. ii. 16. and Tit. iii. 9.) and what a task had the apostles to keep them within bounds, and maintain good order in the churches? How often do they mention their irregularities? The prevailing of such like disorders seems to have been the special occasion of writing many of their epistles. The church in that great effusion of the spirit, and under strong impressions, had the care of infallible guides, that watched over them day and night; but yet, so prone were they, through the weakness and corruption of human nature, to get out of the way, that irregularity and confusion rose in some churches, where there was an extraordinary outpouring of the spirit, to a very great height, even in the Apostles' lifetime, and under their eye. And though some of the Apostles lived long to settle the state of things, yet, presently after their death the christian church ran into many superstitions and childish notions and practices, and in some respects into a great severity in their zeal. And let any wise person, that has not in the midst of the disputes of the present day got beyond the calmness of consideration, impartially consider, to what lengths we may reasonably suppose many of the primitive

christians, in their heat of zeal, and under their extraordinary impressions, would soon have gone, if they had not had inspired guides. Is it not probable, that the church of *Corinth* in particular, by an increase of their irregularities and contentions, would in a little time have been broken to pieces, and dissolved in a state of the utmost confusion? And yet this would have been no evidence that there had not been a most glorious and remarkable outpouring of the spirit in that city. But as for us, we have no infallible Apostle to guide and direct us, to rectify disorders, and reclaim us when we are wandering; but every one does what is right in his own eyes; and they that err in judgment, and are got into a wrong path, continue to wander, till experience of the mischievous issue convinces them of their error.

If we look over this affair, and seriously weigh it in its circumstances, it will appear a matter of no great difficulty to account for the errors that have been gone into, supposing the work in general to be from a very great outpouring of the spirit of God. It may easily be accounted for, that many have run into just such errrors as they have. It is known, that some who have been great instruments to promote this work were very young. They were newly awaked out of sleep, and brought out of that state of darkness, insensibility, and spiritual death, in which they had been ever since they were born. A new and wonderful scene opens to them; and they have in view the reality, the vastness, the infinite importance, and nearness of spiritual and eternal things; and at the same time are surprised to see the world asleep about them. They have not the advantage of age and experience, and have had but little opportunity to study divinity, or to converse with aged experienced christians and divines. How natural is it then for such to fall into many errors with respect to the state of mankind, with which they are so surprised, and with respect to the means and methods of their relief? Is it any wonder that they have not at once learned how to make allowances, and that they do not at once find out that method of dealing with the world, which is adapted to the mysterious state and nature of mankind? Is it any wonder that they cannot at once foresee the consequences of things, what evils are to be guarded against, and what difficulties are like to arise?

We have long been in a strange stupor: The influences of the Spirit of God upon the heart have been but little felt, and the nature of them but little taught; so that they are in many respects new to great numbers of those who have lately

fallen under them. And is it any wonder that they who never before had experience of the supernatural influence of the divine spirit upon their souls, and never were instructed in the nature of these influences, do not so well know how to ditinguish one extraordinary new impression from another, and so (to themselves insensibly) run into enthusiasm, taking every strong impulse or impression to be divine? How natural is it to suppose, that among the multitudes of illiterate people who find themselves so wonderfully changed, and brought into such new circumstances, many should pass wrong and very strange judgments of both persons and things about them? Now they behold them in a new light, and in their surprise they go further from the judgment that they were wont to make of them than they ought, and, in their great change of sentiments, pass from one extreme to another? And why should it be thought strange, that those who scarce ever heard of any such thing as an outpouring of the Spirit of God before; or, if they did, had no notion of it; do not know how to behave themselves in such a new and strange state of things? And is it any wonder that they are ready to hearken to those who have instructed them, who have been the means of delivering them from such a state of death and misery as they were in before, or have a name for being the happy instruments of promoting the same work among others? Is it unaccountable that persons in these circumstances are ready to receive every thing they say, and to drink down error as well as truth from them? And why should there be all indignation, and no compassion, towards those who are thus misled?

These persons are extraordinarily affected with a new sense, and recent discovery, of the greatness and excellency of the Divine Being, the certainty and infinite importance of eternal things, the preciousness of souls, and the dreadful danger and madness of mankind, together with a great sense of God's distinguishing kindness and love to them. Is it any wonder that now they think they must exert themselves, and do something extraordinary for the honour of God and the good of souls? They know not how to sit still, and forbear speaking and acting with uncommon earnestness and vigour. And in these circumstances, if they be not persons of more than common steadiness and discretion, or have not some person of wisdom to direct them, it is a wonder if they do not proceed without due caution, and do things that are irregular, and that will, in the issue, do much more hurt than good.

Censuring others is the worst disease with which this affair,

has been attended. But this is indeed a time of great temptation to this sinful error. When there has been a long-continued deadness, and many are brought out of a state of nature in so extraordinary a manner, and filled with such uncommon degrees of light, it is natural for such to form their notions of a state of grace wholly from what they experience. Many of them know no other way; for they never have been taught much about a state of grace, the different degrees of grace, and the degrees of darkness and corruption with which grace is compatible, nor concerning the manner of the influences of the spirit in converting a soul, and the variety of the manner of his operations. They therefore forming their idea of a state of grace only by their own experience, no wonder that it appears an insuperable difficulty to them to reconcile such a state, of which they have this idea, with what they observe in professors about them. It is indeed in itself a very great mystery, that grace should be compatible with so much and such kind of corruption as sometimes prevails in the truly godly; and no wonder that it especially appears so to uninstructed new converts, who have been converted in an extraordinary manner.

Though censoriousness is very sinful, and is most commonly found in hypocrites and persons of a pharisaical spirit, yet it is not so inconsistent with true godliness as some imagine. We have remarkable instances of it in those holy men of whom we have an account in the book of Job. Not only were Job's three friends, who seem to have been eminently holy men, guilty of it, in very unreasonably censuring the best man on earth—very positively determining that he was an unconverted man—but Job himself, who was not only a man of true piety, but excelled all men in piety, and particularly excelled in a humble, meek and patient spirit, was guilty of bitterly censuring his three friends, as wicked, vile hypocrites, Job xvi. 9—11. *He teareth me in his wrath who hateth me, he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me: They have gaped upon me with their mouth.—God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.* He is very positive that they are hypocrites, and shall be miserably destroyed as such, Job xvii. 2—4. *Are there not mockers with me? and doeth not mine eye continue in their provocation? Lay down now, put me in surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me? For thou hast hid their heart from understanding, therefore shalt thou not exalt them.* And again, v. 8—10. *Upright men shall be astonished*

at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite; The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. But as for you all, do you return and come now, for I cannot find one wise man (i. e. one good man) *among you.*

Thus, I think, the errors and irregularities that attend this work may be accounted for, from the consideration of the infirmity and common corruption of mankind, together with the circumstances of the work, though we should suppose it to be the work of God. And it would not be a just objection in any to say, If these powerful impressions and great affections are from the Spirit of God, why does not the same spirit give strength of understanding and capacity in proportion, to those persons who are the subjects of them; so that strong affections may not, through their error, drive them to an irregular and sinful conduct? I do not know that God has any where obliged himself to do it. The end of the influences of God's Spirit is, to make men spiritually wise to salvation, which is the most excellent wisdom; and he has also appointed means for our gaining such degrees of other knowledge as we need, to conduct ourselves regularly, which means should be carefully used. But the end of the influence of the Spirit of God is not to increase mens natural capacities, nor has God obliged himself immediately to increase civil prudence in proportion to the degrees of spiritual light.

If we consider the errors that attend this work, not only as from man and his infirmity, but also as from God and by his permission and disposal, they are not strange, upon the supposition of its being, as to the substance of it, a work of God. If God intends this great revival of religion to be the dawning of a happy state of his church on earth, it may be an instance of the divine wisdom, in the beginning of it, to suffer so many irregularities and errors in conduct, to which he knew men in their present weak state were most exposed, under great religious affections, and when animated with great zeal. For it is very likely to be of excellent benefit to his church, in the continuance and progress of the work afterwards. Their experience, in the first setting out, of the mischievous consequences of these errors, and smarting for them in the beginning may be a happy defence to them afterwards, for many generations, from these errors, which otherwise they might continually be exposed to. As when *David* and all *Israel* went about to bring back the ark into the midst of the land, after it had been long absent, first in the land of the *Philistines*, and

then in *Kirjathjearim*, in the utmost borders of the land; they at first sought not the Lord after the due order, and they smarted for their error: But this put them upon studying the law, and more thoroughly acquainting themselves with the mind and will of God, and seeking and serving him with greater circumspection. The consequence was glorious, viz. their seeking God in such a manner as was accepted of him. The Ark of God ascended into the heights of *Zion*, with great and extraordinary rejoicings of the king and all the people, without any frown or rebuke from God intermixed; and God dwelt thenceforward in the midst of the people for those glorious purposes expressed in the 68th Psalm.

It is very analogous to the manner of God's dealing with his people, to permit a great deal of error, and suffer the infirmity of his people to appear, in the beginning of a glorious work of his grace, for their felicity, to teach them what they are, to humble them, and fit them for that glorious prosperity to which he is about to advance them, and the more to secure to himself the honour of such a glorious work. For, by man's exceeding weakness appearing in the beginning of it, it is evident that God does not lay the foundation of it in man's strength or wisdom.—And as we need not wonder at the errors that attend this work, if we look at the hand of men who are guilty of them, and the hand of God in permitting them; so neither shall we see cause to wonder if we consider them with regard to the hand that Satan has in them. For, as the work is much greater than any other that ever has been in *New-England;* so, no wonder that the devil is more alarmed and enraged, that he exerts himself more vigorously against it, and more powerfully endeavours to tempt and mislead the subjects and promoters of it.

SECT. IV.

The Nature of the Work in general.

WHATEVER imprudences there have been, and whatever sinful irregularities; whatever vehemence of the passions, and heats of the imagination, transports and extasies: whatever error in judgment, and indiscreet zeal; and whatever outcries, faintings, and agitations of body; yet, it is manifest and notorious, that there has been of late a very uncommon influence upon the minds of a very great part of the inhabitants of *New-*

England, attended with the best effects. There has been a great increase of seriousness, and sober consideration of eternal things; a disposition to hearken to what is said of such things, with attention and affection; a disposition to treat matters of religion with solemnity, and as of great importance; to make these things the subject of conversation; to hear the word of God preached, and to take all opportunities in order to it; to attend on the public worship of God, and all external duties of religion, in a more solemn and decent manner; so that there is a remarkable and general alteration in the face of *New-England* in these respects. Multitudes in all parts of the land, of vain, thoughtless, regardless persons, are quite changed, and become serious and considerate. There is a vast increase of concern for the salvation of the precious soul, and of that enquiry, *What shall I do to be saved?* The hearts of multitudes have been greatly taken off from the things of the world, its profits, pleasures and honours. Multitudes in all parts have had their consciences awakened, and have been made sensible of the pernicious nature and consequences of sin, and what a dreadful thing it is to be under guilt and the displeasure of God, and to live without peace and reconciliation with him. They have also been awakned to a sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the reality of another world and future judgment, and of the necessity of an interest in Christ. They are more afraid of sin, more careful and inquisitive that they may know what is contrary to the mind and will of God, that they may avoid it, and what he requires of them, that they may do it, more careful to guard against temptations, more watchful over their own hearts, earnestly desirous of knowing, and of being diligent in the use of the means that God has appointed in his word, in order to salvation. Many very stupid, senseless sinners, and persons of a vain mind, have been greatly awakened.

Tnere is a strange alteration almost all over *New-England* amongst young people: by a powerful invisible influence on their minds, they have been brought to forsake, in a general way, as it were at once, those things of which they were extremely fond, and in which they seemed to place the happiness of their lives, and which nothing before could induce them to forsake; as their frolicking, vain company-keeping, night-walking, their mirth and jollity, their impure language, and lewd songs. In vain did ministers preach against those things before, in vain were laws made to restrain them, and in vain was

all the vigilance of magistrates and civil officers; but now they have almost every where dropt them as it were of themselves. And there is great alteration amongst old and young as to drinking, tavern-haunting, prophane speaking, and extravagance in apparel. Many notoriously vicious persons have been reformed, and become externally quite new creatures. Some that are wealthy, and of a fashionable, gay education; some great beaus and fine ladies, that seemed to have their minds swallowed up with nothing but the vain shews and pleasures of the world, have been wonderfully altered, have relinquished these vanities, and are become serious, mortified and humble in their conversation. It is astonishing to see the alteration there is in some towns, where before there was but little appearance of religion, or any thing but vice and vanity. And now they are transformed into another sort of people; their former vain, worldly and vicious conversation and dispositions seem to be forsaken, and they are, as it were, gone over to a new world. Their thoughts, their talk, and their concern, affections and enquiries are now about the favour of God, an interest in Christ, a renewed sanctified heart, and a spiritual blessedness, acceptance and happiness in a future world.

Now, through the greater part of *New-England*, the holy Bible is in much greater esteem and use than before. The great things contained in it are much more regarded, as things of the greatest consequence, and are much more the subjects of meditation and conversation; and other books of piety that have long been of established reputation, as the most excellent, and most tending to promote true godliness, have been abundantly more in use. The Lord's day is more religiously and strictly observed. And much has been lately done at making up differences, confessing faults one to another, and making restitution: probably more within two years, than was done in thirty years before. It has been undoubtedly so in many places. And surprising has been the power of this spirit, in many instances, to destroy old grudges, to make up long-continued breaches, and to bring those who seemed to be in a confirmed irreconcileable alienation, to embrace each other in a sincere and entire amity. Great numbers under this influence have been brought to a deep sense of their own sinfulness and vileness; the sinfulness of their lives, the heinousness of their disregard of the authority of the great God, and of their living in contempt of a Saviour. They have lamented their former negligence of their souls, and their neglecting and losing precious time. The sins of their life have been extraordinarily set before them; and they have had a great sense of their hardness

of heart, their enmity against that which is good, and proneness to all evil; and also of the worthlesness of their own religious performances, how unworthy of God's regard were their prayers, praises, and all that they did in religion. It has been a common thing, that persons have had such a sense of their own sinfulness, that they have thought themselves to be the worst of all, and that none ever was so vile as they. And many seem to have been greatly convinced that they were utterly unworthy of any mercy at the hands of God, however miserable they were, and though they stood in extreme necessity of mercy; and that they deserved nothing but eternal burnings. They have been sensible that God would be altogether just and righteous in inflicting endless damnation upon them, at the same time that they have had an exceedingly affecting sense of the dreadfulness of such endless torments, and apprehended themselves to be greatly in danger of it. And many have been deeply affected with a sense of their own ignorance and blindness, and exceeding helplesness, and so of their extreme need of the divine pity and help.

Multitudes in *New-England* have lately been brought to a new and great conviction of the truth and certainty of the things of the gospel; to a firm persuasion that Christ Jesus is the son of God, and the great and only Saviour of the world; and that the great doctrines of the gospel touching reconciliation by his blood, and acceptance in his righteousness, and eternal life and salvation through him, are matters of undoubted truth. They have had a most affecting sense of the excellency and sufficiency of this Saviour, and the glorious wisdom and grace of God shining in this way of salvation; and of the wonders of Christ's dying love, and the sincerity of Christ in the invitations of the gospel. They have experienced a consequent affiance and sweet rest of soul in Christ, as a glorious Saviour, a strong rock and high tower; accompanied with an admiring and exalted apprehension of the glory of the divine perfections, God's majesty, holiness, sovereign grace, &c.—; with a sensible, strong and sweet love to God, and delight in him, far surpassing all temporal delights, or earthly pleasures; and a rest of soul in him, as a portion and the fountain of all good. And this has been attended with an abhorrence of sin, and self-lothing for it, and earnest longings of soul after more holiness and conformity to God, with a sense of the great need of God's help in order to holiness of life; together they have had a most dear love to all that are supposed to be the children of God, and a love to mankind in general, and a most sensible

and tender compassion for the souls of sinners, and earnest desires of the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. And these things have appeared with an abiding concern to live a holy life, and great complaints of remaining corruption, and a longing to be more free from the body of sin and death. And not only do these effects appear in new converts, but great numbers of those who were formerly esteemed the most sober and pious people, have, under the influence of this work, been greatly quickened, and their hearts renewed with greater degrees of light, renewed repentance and humiliation, and more lively exercises of faith, love and joy in the Lord. Many have been remarkably engaged to watch, and strive, and fight against sin; to cast out every idol, sell all for Christ, give up themselves entirely to God, and make a sacrifice of every worldly and carnal thing to the welfare and prosperity of their souls. And there has of late appeared in some places an unusual disposition to bind themselves to it in a solemn covenant with God. And now, instead of meetings at taverns and drinking-houses, and of young people in frolicks and vain company, the country is full of meetings of all sorts and ages of persons—young and old, men, women and little children—to read and pray, and sing praises, and to converse of the things of God and another world. In very many places the main of the conversation in all companies turns on religion, and things of a spiritual nature. Instead of vain mirth among young people, there is now either mourning under a sense of the guilt of sin, or holy rejoicing in Christ Jesus: and, instead of their lewd songs, there are now to be heard from them songs of praise to God, and the Lamb that was slain to redeem them by his blood. And there has been this alteration abiding on multitudes all over the land, for a year and a half, without any appearance of a disposition to return to former vice and vanity.

And, under the influences of this work, there have been many of the remains of those wretched people and dregs of mankind, the poor *Indians*, that seemed to be next to a state of brutality, and with whom, till now, it seemed to be to little more purpose to use endeavours for their instruction and awakening, than with the beasts. Their minds have now been strangely opened to receive instruction, and been deeply affected with the concerns of their precious souls; they have reformed their lives, and forsaken their former stupid, barbarous and brutish way of living; and particularly that sin to which they have been so exceedingly addicted, their drunkenness. Many of them to appearance brought truly and greatly

to delight in the things of God, and to have their souls very much engaged and entertained with the great things of the gospel. And many of the poor *Negroes* also have been in like manner wrought upon and changed. Very many little children have been remarkably enlightened, and their hearts wonderfully affected and enlarged, and their mouths opened, expressing themselves in a manner far beyond their years, and to the just astonishment of those who have heard them. Some of them for many months, have been greatly and delightfully affected with the glory of divine things, and the excellency and love of the Redeemer, with their hearts greatly filled with love to and joy in him; and they have continued to be serious and pious in their behaviour.

The divine power of this work has marvellously appeared in some instances I have been acquainted with; in supporting and fortifying the heart under great trials, such as the death of children, and extreme pain of body; and in wonderfully maintaining the serenity, calmness and joy of the soul, in an immoveable rest in God, and sweet resignation to him. And some under the blessed influences of this work have, in a calm, bright and joyful frame of mind, been carried through the valley of the shadow of death.

And now let us consider;——Is it not strange that in a Christian country, and such a land of light as this is, there are many at a loss to conclude whose work this is, whether the work of God or the work of the devil? Is it not a shame to *New-England* that such a work should be much doubted of here? Need we look over the histories of all past times, to see if there be not some circumstances and external appearances that attend this work, which have been formerly found amongst enthusiasts? Whether the *Montanists* had not great transports of joy, and whether the *French Prophets* had not agitations of body? Blessed be God! he does not put us to the toil of such enquiries. We need not say, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring us down something whereby to judge of this work? Nor does God send us beyond the seas, nor into past ages, to obtain a rule that shall determine and satisfy us: but we have a rule near at hand, a sacred book that God himself has put into our hands, with clear and infallible marks, sufficient to resolve us in things of this nature; which book I think we must reject, not only in some particular passages, but in the substance of it, if we reject such a work as has now been described, as not being the work of God. The

whole tenor of the gospel proves it; all the notion of religion that the Scripture gives us confirms it.

I suppose there is scarcely a Minister in this land, but from Sabbath to Sabbath is used to pray that God would pour out his Spirit, and work a reformation and revival of religion in the country, and turn us from our intemperance, profaneness, uncleanness, worldliness and other sins; and we have kept from year to year, days of public fasting and prayer to God, to acknowledge our backslidings, and humble ourselves for our sins, and to seek of God forgiveness and reformation: And now when so great and extensive a reformation is so suddenly and wonderfully accomplished, in those very things that we have sought to God for, shall we not acknowledge it? or, do it with great coldness, caution and reserve, and scarcely take any notice of it in our public prayers and praises, or mention it but slightly and cursorily, and in such a manner as carries an appearance as though we would contrive to say as little of it as ever we could, and were glad to pass from it? And that because the work is attended with a mixture of error, imprudences, darkness and sin; because some persons are carried away with impressions, and are indiscreet, and too censorious with their zeal; and because there are high transports of religious affections; and some effects on their bodies of which we do not understand the reason.

SECT. V.

The Nature of the Work in a particular Instance.

I HAVE been particularly acquainted with many persons who have been the subjects of the high and extraordinary transports of the present day. But in the highest transports I have been acquainted with, and where the affections of admiration, love and joy, so far as another could judge, have been raised to the highest pitch, the following things have been united, *viz.* A very frequent dwelling for some considerable time together, in views of the glory of the divine perfections and Christ's excellencies; so that the soul has been as it were perfectly overwhelmed, and swallowed up with light and love, a sweet solace, and a rest and joy of soul altogether unspeakable. The person has more than once continued for five or six hours together, without interruption, in a clear and lively view or sense of the infinite beauty and amiableness of Christ's per-

son, and the heavenly sweetness of his transcendent love. So that, (to use the person's own expressions) the soul remained in a kind of heavenly elysium, and did as it were swim in the rays of Christ's love, like a little mote swimming in the beams of the sun that come in at a window. The heart was swallowed up in a kind of glow of Christ's love coming down as a constant stream of sweet light, at the same time the soul all flowing out in love to him; so that there seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing from heart to heart. The soul dwelt on high, was lost in God, and seemed almost to leave the body. The mind dwelt in a pure delight that fed and satisfied it; enjoying pleasure without the least sting, or any interruption. And, (so far as the judgment and word of a person of discretion may be taken, speaking upon the most deliberate consideration) what was enjoyed in each single minute of the whole space, which was many hours, was worth more than all the outward comfort and pleasure of the whole life put together; and this without being in any trance, or at all deprived of the exercise of the bodily senses. And this heavenly delight has been enjoyed for years together; though not frequently so long together, to such a height. Extraordinary views of divine things, and the religious affections, were frequenly attended with very great effects on the body. Nature often sunk under the weight of divine discoveries, and the strength of the body was taken away. The person was deprived of all ability to stand or speak. Sometimes the hands were clinched, and the flesh cold, but the senses remaining. Animal nature was often in a great emotion and agitation, and the soul so overcome with admiration, and a kind of omnipotent joy, as to cause the person, unavoidably, to leap with all the might, with joy and mighty exultation. The soul at the same time was so strongly drawn towards God and Christ in heaven, that it seemed to the person as though soul and body would, as it were of themselves, of necessity mount up, leave the earth, and ascend thither.

These effects on the body were not owing to the influence of example, but began about seven years ago, when there was no such enthusiastical season as many account this, but it was a very dead time through the land. They arose from no distemper catched from Mr. *Whitefield*, or Mr. *Tennant*, because they began before either of them came into the country.—Near three years ago, they greatly increased, upon an extraordinary self-dedication, renunciation of the world, and resignation of all to God; which were made in a great view of

God's excellency, in high exercise of love to him, and rest and joy in him. Since that time they have been very frequent; and began in a yet higher degree, and greater frequency about a year and a half ago, upon another new resignation of all to God, with a yet greater fervency and delight of soul; the body often fainting with the love of Christ.—These effects appeared in a higher degree still, the last winter, upon another resignation to and acceptance of God, as the only portion and happiness of the soul, wherein the whole world, with the dearest enjoyments in it, were renounced as dirt and dung. All that is pleasant and glorious, and all that is terrible in this world, seemed perfectly to vanish into nothing, and nothing to be left but God, in whom the soul was perfectly swallowed up, as in an infinite ocean of blessedness.—Since this time there have often been great agitations of body, and an unavoidable leaping for joy; and the soul as it were dwelling, almost without interruption, in a kind of paradise; and very often, in high transports, disposed to speak to others concerning the great and glorious things of God, and Christ, and the eternal world, in a most earnest manner, and with a loud voice, so that it is next to impossible to avoid it. These effects on the body did not arise from any bodily distemper or weakness, because the greatest of all have been in a good state of health.

This great rejoicing has been with trembling, *i. e.* attended with a deep and lively sense of the greatness and majesty of God, and the person's own exceeding littleness and vileness. Spiritual joys in this person never were attended with the least appearance of laughter, or lightness, either of countenance or manner of speaking; but with a peculiar abhorrence of such appearances in spiritual rejoicings. These high transports, when past, have had abiding effects in the increase of sweetness, rest and humility which they have left upon the soul; and a new engagedness of heart to live to God's honour, and watch and fight against sin. And these things took place not in the giddy age of youth, nor in a new convert, or unexperienced Christian, but in one that was converted above twenty-seven years ago; and neither converted nor educated in that enthusiastic town of *Northampton*, (as some may be ready to call it) but in a town and family which none, that I know of, suspected of enthusiasm. And these effects were found in a Christian that has been long, in an uncommon manner, growing in grace, and rising, by very sensible degrees, to higher love to God, weanedness from the world, mastery over sin

and temptation, through great trials and conflicts, long-continued strugglings and fighting with sin, earnest and constant prayer and labour in religion, and engagedness of mind in the use of all means, attended with a great exactness of life.—Which growth has been attended, not only with a great increase of religious affections, but with a wonderful alteration of outward behaviour, in many things, visible to those who are most intimately acquainted, so as lately to have become as it were a new person; and particularly in living so much more above the world, and in a greater degree of stedfastness and strength in the way of duty and self-denial, maintaining the Christian conflict against temptations, and conquering from time to time under great trials; persisting in an unmoved, untouched calm and rest, under the changes and accidents of time. The person had formerly, in lower degrees of grace, been subject to unsteadiness, and many ups and downs, in the frame of mind, being under great disadvantages, through a vapoury habit of body, and often subject to melancholy, and at times almost over-born with it, it having been so even from early youth; But strength of Grace and divine light has of a long time wholly conquered these disadvantages, and carried the mind, in a constant manner, quite above all such effects.—Since that resignation spoken of before, made near three years ago, every thing of that nature seems to be overcome and crushed by the power of faith and trust in God, and resignation to him; the person has remained in a constant uninterrupted rest, humble joy in God, and assurance of his favour, without one hour's melancholy or darkness, from that day to this; vapours have had great effects on the body, such as they used to have before, but the soul has been always out of their reach. And this stedfastness and constancy has remained through great outward changes and trials; such as times of the most extreme pain, and apparent hazard of immediate death.

These transporting views and rapturous affections are not attended with any enthusiastic disposition to follow impulses, or any supposed prophetical revelations; nor have they been observed to be attended with any appearance of spiritual pride, but very much of a contrary disposition, an increase of humility and meekness, and a disposition in honour to prefer others. And it is worthy to be remarked, that when these discoveries and holy affections were evidently at the greatest height—which began early in the morning of the holy Sabbath, and

lasted for days together, melting all down in the deepest humility and poverty of spirit, reverence and resignation, and the sweetest meekness, and universal benevolence—these two things were felt in a remarkable manner, *viz. First*, a peculiar aversion to judging other professing Christians of good standing in the visible church, with respect to their conversion or degrees of grace; or at all intermeddling with that matter, so much as to determine against and condemn others in the thought of the heart. Such want of candour appeared hateful, as not agreeing with that lamb-like humility, meekness, gentleness, and charity, which the soul then, above other times, saw to be beautiful. The disposition then felt was, on the contrary, to prefer others to self, and to hope that they saw more of God and loved him better; though before, under smaller discoveries, and feebler exercises of divine affection, there had been a disposition to censure and condemn others. *Secondly*, another thing that was felt at that time, was a very great sense of the importance of moral social duties, and how great a part of religion lay in them. There was such a new sense and conviction of this, beyond what had been before, that it seemed to be as it were a clear discovery then made to the soul. But, in general, there has been a very great increase of a sense of these two things, as divine views and divine love have increased.

The things already mentioned have been attended also with the following things, *viz.* An extraordinary sense of the awful majesty, greatness and holiness of God, so as sometimes to overwhelm soul and body; a sense of the piercing all-seeing eye of God, so as sometimes to take away the bodily strength; and an extraordinary view of the infinite terribleness of the wrath of God; together with a sense of the ineffable misery of sinners who are exposed to this wrath. Sometimes the exceeding pollution of the person's own heart, as a sink of all manner of abomination, and the dreadfulness of an eternal hell of God's wrath, opened to view both together. There was a clear view of a desert of that misery, and that by the pollution of the best duties; yea, only by the irreverence, and want of humility that attended once speaking of the holy name of God, when done in the best manner that ever it was done. The strength of the body was very often taken away with a deep mourning for sin, as committed against so holy and good a God; sometimes with an affecting sense of actual sin, sometimes especially indwelling sin, and sometimes the consideration of the sin of the heart as appearing in a particular thing,

as for instance, in that there was no greater forwardness and readiness to self-denial for God and Christ, who had so denied himself for us. Yea, sometimes the consideration of sin that was in only speaking one word concerning the infinitely great and holy God, has been so affecting as to overcome the strength of nature. There has been a very great sense of the certain truth of the great things revealed in the gospel; an overwhelming sense of the glory of the work of redemption, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ; of the glorious harmony of the divine attributes appearing therein, as that wherein mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other. A sight of the fulness and glorious sufficiency of Christ, has been so affecting as to overcome the body. A constant immoveable trust in God through Christ, with a great sense of his strength and faithfulness, the sureness of his covenant and the immutability of his promises, made the everlasting mountains and perpetual hills to appear as mere shadows to these things.

Sometimes the sufficiency and faithfulness of God, as the covenant God of his people, appeared in these words, I AM THAT I AM, in so affecting a manner as to overcome the body. A sense of the glorious, unsearchable, unerring wisdom of God in his works, both of creation and providence, was such as to swallow up the soul, and overcome the strength of the body. There was a sweet rejoicing of soul at the thoughts of God being infinitely and unchangeably happy, and an exulting gladness of heart that God is self-sufficient, and infinitely above all dependence, and reigns over all, and does his will with absolute and uncontroulable power and Sovereignty. A sense of the glory of the Holy Spirit, as the great comforter, was such as to overwhelm both soul and body; only mentioning the word the COMFORTER, has immediately taken away all strength; that word, as the person expressed it, seemed great enough to fill heaven and earth. There was a most vehement and passionate desire of the honour and glory of God's name; a sensible, clear and constant preference of it, not only to the person's own temporal interest, but to his spiritual comfort in this world. There was a willingness to suffer the hidings of God's face, and to live and die in darkness and horror, if God's honour should require it, and to have no other reward for it but that God's name should be glorified, although so much of the sweetness of the light of God's countenance had been experienced. A great lamenting of ingratitude and the defect of love to God, took away bodily strength; and there

were very often vehement longings and faintings after more love to Christ, and greater conformity to him; especially longing after these two things, *viz.* to be more perfect in *humility* and *adoration*. The flesh and heart seem often to cry out for lying low before God, and adoring him with greater love and humility. The thoughts of the perfect humility with which the saints in heaven worship God, and fall down before his throne, have often overcome the body, and set it into a great agitation. The person felt a great delight in singing praises to God and Jesus Christ, and longing that this present life may be, as it were, one continued song of praise to God. There was a longing, as the person expressed it, to sit and sing this life away; and an overcoming pleasure in the thoughts of spending an eternity in that exercise. Together with living by faith to a great degree, there was a constant and extraordinary distrust of our own strength and wisdom; a great dependance on God for his help in order to the performance of any thing to God's acceptance, and being restrained from the most horrid sins.

A sense of the black ingratitude of true saints, as to coldness and deadness in religion, and their setting their hearts on the things of this world, has overcome the bodily frame.—There was an experience of great longing that all the children of God might be lively in religion, fervent in their love, and active in the service of God; and, when there have been appearances of it in others, rejoicing so in beholding the pleasant sight, that the joy of soul has been too great for the body.—The person took pleasure in the thoughts of watching and striving against sin, fighting through the way to heaven, and filling up this life with hard labour, and bearing the cross for Christ, as an opportunity to give God honour; not desiring to rest from labours till arrived in heaven, but abhorring the thoughts of it, and seeming astonished that God's own children should be backward to strive and deny themselves for God. There were earnest longings that all God's people might be clothed with humility and meekness, like the Lamb of God, and feel nothing in their hearts but love and compassion to all mankind; and great grief when any thing to the contrary appeared in any of the children of God, as bitterness, fierceness of zeal, censoriousness, or reflecting uncharitably on others, or disputing with any appearance of heat of spirit: a deep concern for the good of others souls; a melting compassion to those that looked on themselves as in a state of nature, and to saints under darkness, so as to cause the body to faint,

There was found an universal benevolence to mankind, with a longing as it were to embrace the whole world in the arms of pity and love; and ideas of suffering from enemies the utmost conceivable rage and cruelty, with a disposition felt to fervent love and pity in such a case, so far as it could be realized in thought. Sometimes a disposition was felt to a life given up to mourning alone in a wilderness over a lost and miserable world; compassion towards them being often to that degree, that would allow of no support or rest, but in going to God, and pouring out the soul in prayer for them. Earnest desires were felt that the work of God, now in the land, may be carried on, and that with greater purity, and freedom from all bitter zeal, censoriousness, spiritual pride, hot disputes, &c. and a vehement and constant desire for the setting up of Christ's kingdom through the earth, as a kingdom of holiness, purity, love, peace and happiness to mankind.

The soul often entertained, with unspeakable delight, the thoughts of heaven, as a world of love; where love shall be the Saint's eternal food, where they shall dwell in the light, and swim in an ocean of love, and where the very air and breath will be nothing but love; love to the people of God, or God's true Saints, as having the image of Christ, and as those who will in a very little time shine in his perfect image. The strength was very often taken away with longings that others might love God more, and serve God better, and have more of his comfortable presence, than the person that was the subject of these longings; desiring to follow the whole world to heaven, or that every one should go before, and be higher in grace and happiness, not by this person's diminution, but by others increase. This experience included a delight in conversing on religious subjects, and in seeing Christians together, talking of the most spiritual and heavenly things in religion, in a lively and feeling manner; and very frequently the person was overcome with the pleasure of such conversation. A great sense was often expressed, of the importance of the duty of charity to the poor, and how much the generality of Christians come short in the practice of it. There was also a great sense of the need ministers have of much of the Spirit of God, at this day especially; and there were most earnest longings and wrestlings with God for them, so as to take away the bodily strength. It also included the greatest, fullest, longest continued, and most constant assurance of the favour of God, and of a title to future glory, that ever I saw any appearance of in any person, enjoying, especially of late, (to use the person's own expres-

sion) *the riches of full assurance.* Formerly there was a longing to die with something of impatience; but lately, since that resignation, forementioned, about three years ago, an uninterrupted entire resignation to God with respect to life or death, sickness or health, ease or pain, which has remained unchanged and unshaken, when actually under extreme and violent pains, and in times of threatnings of immediate death. But notwithstanding this patience and submission, the thoughts of death and the day of judgment are always exceeding sweet to the soul. This resignation is also attended with a constant resignation of the lives of dearest earthly friends, and sometimes when some of their lives have been imminently threatened; the person often expressing the sweetness of the liberty of having wholly left the world, and renounced all for God, and having nothing but God, in whom is an infinite fulness. These things have been attended with a constant sweet peace and calm, and serenity of soul, without any cloud to interrupt it; a continual rejoicing in all the works of God's hands, the works of nature, and God's daily works of providence, all appearing with a sweet smile upon them; a wonderful access to God by prayer, as it were seeing him, and immediately conversing with him, as much oftentimes (to use the person's own expressions) as if Christ were here on earth, sitting on a visible throne, to be approached to and conversed with.

There have been frequent, plain, sensible and immediate answers of prayer, all tears wiped away, all former troubles and sorrows of life forgotten, and all sorrow and sighing fled away—excepting grief for past sins, and for remaining corruption, and that Christ is loved no more, and that God is no more honoured in the world; and a compassionate grief towards fellow-creatures—a daily sensible doing and suffering every thing for God, for a long time past, eating, working, sleeping, and bearing pain and trouble for God, and doing all as the service of love, with a continual uninterrupted chearfulness, peace and joy. Oh how good, said the person once, is it to work for God in the day time, and at night to lie down under his smiles! High experiences and religious affections in this person have not been attended with any disposition at all to neglect the necessary business of a secular calling, to spend the time in reading and prayer, and other exercises of devotion; but worldly business has been attended with great alacrity, as part of the service of God: the person declaring that, it being done thus, it was found to be as good as prayer. These things have been accompanied with exceeding concern and

zeal for moral duties, and that all professors may with them adorn the doctrine of God their saviour; and an uncommon care to perform relative and social duties, and a noted eminence in them; a great inoffensiveness of life and conversation in the sight of others; a great meekness, gentleness and benevolence of spirit and behaviour; and a great alteration in those things that formerly used to be the person's failings; seeming to be much overcome and swallowed up by the late great increase of grace, to the observation of those who are most conversant and most intimately acquainted.

In times of the brightest light and highest flights of love and joy, there was found no disposition to the opinion of being now perfectly free from sin, (according to the notion of the *Wesleys* and their followers, and some other high pretenders to Spirituality in these days) but exceedingly the contrary. At such times especially, it was seen how loathsome and polluted the soul is; soul and body and every act and word appearing like rottenness and corruption in that pure and holy light of God's glory. The person did not slight instruction or means of grace any more for having had great discoveries; on the contrary, never was more sensible of the need of instruction than now. And one thing more may be added, *viz.* That these things have been attended with a particular dislike of placing religion much in dress, and spending much zeal about those things that in themselves are matters of indifference, or an affecting to shew humility and devotion by a mean habit, or a demure and melancholy countenance, or any thing singular and superstitious.

SECT. VI.

This Work is very Glorious.

Now if such things are enthusiasm, and the fruits of a distempered brain, let my brain be overmore possessed of that happy distemper! If this be distraction, I pray God that the world of mankind may be all seized with this benign, meek, beneficent, beatifical, glorious distraction! If agitations of body were found in the *French Prophets*, and ten thousand prophets more, it is little to their purpose who bring it as an objection against such a work as this, unless their purpose be to disprove the whole of the Christian religion. The great affections and high transports, that others have lately been under,

are in general of the same kind with those in the instance that has been given, though not to so high a degree, and many of them not so pure and unmixed, and so well regulated. I have had opportunity to observe many instances here and elsewhere; and though there are some instances of great affections in which there has been a great mixture of nature with grace, and, in some, a sad degenerating of religious affections; yet there is that uniformity observable, which makes it easy to be seen, that in general it is the same spirit from whence the work in all parts of the land has originated. And what notions have they of religion, that reject what has been described, as not true religion! What shall we find to answer those expressions in Scripture, *The peace of God that passes all understanding; rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in believing in, and loving an unseen Saviour;—All joy and peace in believing; God's shining into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; With open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and being changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord;—Having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given to us;—Having the Spirit of God and of glory rest upon us;—A being called out of darkness into marvellous light; and having the day-star arise in our hearts:*—I say, if those things which have been mentioned, do not answer these expressions, what else can we find out that does answer them? Those that do not think such things as these to be the fruits of the true spirit, would do well to consider what kind of spirit they are waiting and praying for, and what sort of fruits they expect he should produce when he comes. I suppose it will generally be allowed, that there is such a thing a thing as a glorious outpouring of the Spirt of God to be expected, to introduce very joyful and glorious times upon religious accounts; times wherein holy love and joy will be raised to a great height in true Christians: But, if those things be rejected, what is left that we can find wherewith to patch up a notion, or form an idea, of the high, blessed, joyful religion of these times? What is there sweet, excellent and joyful, of a religious nature, that is entirely of a different nature from these things?

Those who are waiting for the fruits, in order to determine whether this be the work of God or no, would do well to consider, What they are waiting for: Whether it be not to have this wonderful religious influence, and then to see how they will behave themselves? That is, to have grace subside,

and the actings of it in a great measure to cease, and to have persons grow cold and dead; and then to see whether, after that, they will behave themselves with that exactness and brightness of conversation, that is to be expected of lively Christians, or those that are in the vigorous exercises of grace. There are many that will not be satisfied with any exactness or laboriousness in religion now, while persons have their minds much moved, and their affections are high; for they lay it to their flash of affection, and heat of zeal, as they call it; they are waiting to see whether they will carry themselves as well when these affections are over; That is, they are waiting to have persons sicken and lose their strength, that they may see whether they will then behave themselves like healthy strong men. I would desire that they would also consider, whether they be not waiting for more than is reasonably to be expected, supposing this to be really a great work of God, and much more than has been found in former great outpourings of the Spirit of God, that have been universally acknowledged in the Christian church? Do not they expect fewer instances of apostacy and evidences of hypocrisy in professors, than were after that great outpouring of the spirit in the Apostles' days, or that which was in the time of the reformation? And do not they stand prepared to make a mighty argument of it against this work, if there should be *half* so many? And, They would do well to consider how *long* they will wait to see the good fruit of this work, before they will determine in favour of it. Is not their waiting unlimited? The visible fruit that is to be expected of a pouring out of the Spirit of God on a country, is a visible reformation in that country. What reformation has lately been brought to pass in *New-England*, by this work has been before observed. And has it not continued long enough already, to give reasonable satisfaction? If God cannot work on the hearts of a people after such a manner, as reasonably to expect it should be acknowledged in a a year and a half, or two years time; yet surely it is unreasonable that our expectations and demands should be unlimited, and our waiting without any bounds.

As there is the clearest evidence, from what has been observed, that this is the work of God; so it is evident that it is a very great and wonderful and exceeding glorious work.—This is certain, that it is a great and wonderful event, a strange revolution, an unexpected, surprising overturning of

things, suddenly brought to pass; such as never has been seen in *New-England*, and scarce ever has been heard of in any land. Who that saw the state of things in *New-England* a few years ago, would have thought that in so short a time there would be such a change? This is undoubtedly either a very great work of God, or a great work of the devil, as to the main substance of it. For though, undoubtedly, God and the devil may work together at the same time, and in the same land; and Satan will do his utmost endeavour to intrude, and, by intermingling his work, to darken and hinder God's work; yet God and the devil do not work together in producing the same event, and in effecting the same change in the hearts and lives of men. But it is apparent that as to some things wherein the main substance of this work consists, there is a likeness and agreement every where: now this is either a wonderful work of God, or a mighty work of the devil; and so is either a most happy event, greatly to be admired and rejoiced in, or a most awful calamity. Therefore, if what has been said before be sufficient to determine it to be, as to the main, the work of God, then it must be acknowledged to be a very wonderful and glorious work of God.

Such a work is, in its nature and kind, the most glorious of any work of God whatsoever, and is always so spoken of in scripture. It is the work of redemption (the great end of all other works of God, and of which the work of creation was but a shadow) in the event, success and end of it: It is the work of new creation, which is infinitely more glorious than the old. I am bold to say, that the work of God in the conversion of one soul, considered together with the source, foundation and purchase of it, and also the benefit, end and eternal issue of it, is a more glorious work of God than the creation of the whole material universe. It is the most glorious of God's works, as it above all others manifests the glory of God; it is spoken of in scripture, as that which shews *the exceeding greatness of God's power*, and *the glory and riches of divine grace*, and wherein Christ has the most glorious triumph over his enemies, and wherein God is mightily exalted. And it is a work above all others glorious, as it concerns the happiness of mankind; more happiness, and a greater benefit to man, is the fruit of each single drop of such a shower, than all the temporal good of the most happy revolution, or all that a people could gain by the conquest of the world.

This work is very glorious both in its *nature*, and in its *degree* and *circumstances*. It will appear very glorious, if

we consider the unworthiness of the people who are the subjects of it; what obligations God has laid us under by the special privileges we have enjoyed for our souls' good, and the great things God did for us at our first settlement in the land; how he has followed us with his goodness to this day, and how we have abused his goodness; how long we have been revolting more and more (as all confess) and how very corrupt we were become at last; in how great a degree we had forsaken the fountain of living waters; how obstinate we have been under all manner of means that God has used to reclaim us; how often we have mocked God with hypocritical pretences of humiliation, as in our annual days of public fasting, and other things, while, instead of reforming, we only grew worse and worse; and how dead a time it was every where before this work began. If we consider these things, we shall be most stupidly ungrateful, if we do not acknowledge God visiting us as he has done, as an instance of the glorious triumph of free and sovereign grace.

The work is very glorious, if we consider the *extent* of it; being in this respect vastly beyond any that ever was known in *New-England*. There has formerly sometimes been a remarkable awakening and success of the means of grace, in some particular congregations; and this used to be much noticed, and acknowledged to be glorious, though the towns and congregations round about continued dead: But now God has brought to pass a new thing, he has wrought a great work, which has extended from one end of the land to the other, besides what has been wrought in other *British* colonies in *America*.

The work is very glorious in the great *numbers* that have, to appearance, been turned from sin to God, and so, delivered from a wretched captivity to sin and Satan, saved from everlasting burnings, and made heirs of eternal glory. How high an honour, and great a reward of their labours, have some eminent persons of note in the church of God signified that they should esteem it, if they should be made the instruments of the conversion and eternal salvation of but *one* soul? And no greater event than that, is thought worthy of great notice in heaven among the hosts of glorious angels, who rejoice and sing on such an occasion. Now, when there are many thousands of souls thus converted and saved, shall it be esteemed worth but little notice, and be mentioned with coldness and indifference here on earth, by those among whom such a work is wrought.

The work has been very glorious and wonderful in many *circumstances* and events of it, wherein God has in an uncommon manner made his hand visible and his power conspicuous; as in the extraordinary degrees of awakening, and the suddenness of conversions in innumerable instances. How common a thing has it been for a great part of a congregation to be at once moved by a mighty invisible power? and for six, eight or ten souls to be converted to God (to all appearance) in an exercise, in whom the visible change still continues? How great an alteration has been made in some towns, yea, some populous towns, the change still abiding? And how many very vicious persons have been wrought upon, so as to become visibly new creatures? God has also made his hand very visible, and his work glorious, in the multitudes of little children that have been wrought upon. I suppose there have been some hundreds of instances of this nature of late, any one of which formerly would have been looked upon so remarkable, as to be worthy to be recorded, and published through the land. The work is very glorious in its influences and effects on many who have been very ignorant and barbarous, as I before observed of the *Indians and Negroes.*

The work is also exceeding glorious in the high attainments of Christians, in the extraordinary degrees of light, love and spiritual joy, that God has bestowed upon great multitudes. In this respect also, the land in all parts has abounded with such instances, any one of which, if they had happened formerly, would have been thought worthy to be noticed by God's people throughout the *British* dominions. The *New-Jerusalem* in this respect has begun to come down from heaven, and perhaps never were more of the prelibations of heaven's glory given upon earth.

There being a great many errors and sinful irregularities mixed with this work of God, arising from our weakness, darkness and corruption, does not hinder this work of God's power and grace from being very glorious. Our follies and sins in some respects manifest the glory of it. The glory of divine power and grace is set off with the greater lustre, by what appears at the same time of the weakness of the earthen vessel. It is God's pleasure to manifest the weakness and unworthiness of the subject, at the same time that he displays the excellency of his power and riches of his grace. And I doubt not but some of these things which make some of us here on earth to be out of humour, and to look on this work with a sour displeased countenance, heighten the songs of the angels, when they praise

God and the lamb for what they see of the glory of God's all-sufficiency, and the efficacy of Christ's redemption. And how unreasonable is it that we should be backward to acknowledge the glory of what God has done, because the devil, and we in hearkening to him, have done a great deal of mischief?

PART II.

SHEWING THE OBLIGATIONS THAT ALL ARE UNDER TO ACKNOWLEDGE, REJOICE IN, AND PROMOTE THIS WORK; AND THE GREAT DANGER OF THE CONTRARY.

SECT. I.

The Danger of lying still, and keeping long Silence respecting any remarkable Work of God.

There are many things in the word of God, shewing that when God remarkably appears in any great work for his church, and against his enemies, it is a most dangerous thing, and highly provoking to God, to be slow and backward to acknowledge and honour God in the work. Christ's people are in Scripture represented as his army; he is the Lord of hosts, the captain of the host of the Lord, as he called himself when he appeared to *Joshua*, with a sword drawn in his hand, Joshua v. 13—15. the captain of his people's Salvation: And therefore it may well be highly resented, if they do not resort to him when he orders his banner to be displayed; or if they refuse to follow him when he blows the trumpet, and gloriously appears going forth against his enemies. God expects that every living soul should have his attention roused on such an occasion, and should most cheerfully yield to the call, and heedfully and diligently obey it. Isa. xviii. 3. *All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye when he lifteth up an Ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth the trumpet, hear ye.* Especially should all *Israel* be gathered after their Captain, as we read they were after *Ehud*, when he blew the trumpet in Mount *Ephraim*, when he had slain *Eglon* king of *Moab*, Judges iii. 27, 28. How severe is the martial law in such a case, when any of the army refuses to obey the sound of the trumpet, and

follow his general to the battle? God at such a time appears in peculiar manifestations of his glory; and therefore, not to be affected and animated, and to lie still, and refuse to follow God, will be resented as a high contempt of him. Suppose a subject should stand by, and be a spectator of the solemnity of his prince's coronation, and should appear silent and sullen, when all the multitude were testifying their loyalty and joy with loud acclamations; how greatly would he expose himself to be treated as a rebel, and quickly to perish by the authority of the prince that he refuses to honour?

At a time when God manifests himself in such a great work for his church, there is no such thing as being neuters; there is a necessity of being either for or against the king that then gloriously appears. When a king is crowned, and there are public manifestations of joy on that occasion, there is no such thing as standing by as an indifferent spectator; all must appear as loyal subjects, and express their joy on that occasion, or be accounted enemies. So when God, in any great dispensation of his providence, remarkably sets his king on his holy hill of Zion, Christ in an extraordinary manner comes down from heaven to the earth, and appears in his visible church in a great work of salvation for his people. When Christ came down from heaven in his incarnation, and appeared on earth in his human presence, there was no such thing as being neuters, neither on his side nor against him. Those who sat still and said nothing, and did not declare for him, and come and join with him, after he, by his word and works, had given sufficient evidence who he was, were justly looked upon as his enemies; Matt. xii. 30. *He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.* So it is when Christ comes to carry on the work of redemption in the application of it, as well as in its revelation and purchase. If a king should come into one of his provinces, which had been oppressed by its foes, where some of his subjects had fallen off to the enemy, and joined with them against their lawful sovereign and his loyal subjects; I say, if the royal sovereign himself should come into the province, and should ride forth there against his enemies, and should call upon all who were on his side to come and gather themselves to him; there would be no such thing, in such a case, as standing neuter. They who lay still and staid at a distance would undoubtedly be looked upon and treated as rebels. So in the day of battle, when two armies join, there is no such thing for any present as being of neither party, all must be on one side or the other; and they who are not found

with the conqueror in such a case, must expect to have his weapons turned against them, and to fall with the rest of his enemies.

When God manifests himself with such glorious power in a work of this nature, he appears especially determined to put honour upon his son, and to fulfil his oath that he has sworn to him, that he would make every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess to him. God hath had it much on his heart, from all eternity, to glorify his dear and only-begotten Son; and there are some special seasons that he appoints to that end, wherein he comes forth with omnipotent power to fulfil his promise and oath to him. Now these are times of remarkable pouring out of his spirit, to advance his kingdom; such is a day of his power, wherein his people shall be made willing, and he shall rule in the midst of his enemies; these especially are the times wherein God declares his firm decree, that his Son shall reign on his holy hill of *Zion*. And therefore those who at such a time do not kiss the Son, as he then manifests himself, and appears in the glory of his Majesty and grace, expose themselves to *perish from the way*, and to be *dashed in pieces with a rod of iron*.

As such is a time wherein God eminently *sets his King on his holy hill of* Zion, so it is a time wherein he remarkably fulfils that in Isa. xxviii. 16. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.* Which the two Apostles *Peter* and *Paul* (1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8. and Rom. ix. 33.) join with that prophecy, Isa. viii. 14, 15. *And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin, and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.* As signifying that both are fulfilled together. Yea, both are joined together by the prophet *Isaiah* himself; as you may see in the context of that forementioned place. Isa. xxviii. 16. In ver. 13. preceding it is said, *But the word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared and taken.* And accordingly, when Christ is in a peculiar and eminent manner manifested and magnified, by a glorious work of God in his church, as a foundation and a sanctury for some, he is remarkably a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, a gin and a snare to others. They who continue long to stumble,

and to be offended and insnared in their minds, at such a great and glorious work of Christ, in God's account, stumble at Christ, and are offended in him; for the work is that by which he makes Christ manifest, and shows his glory, and by which he makes *the stone that the builders refused, to become the head of the corner.* This shows how dangerous it is to continue always stumbling at such a work, for ever doubting of it, and forbearing fully to acknowledge it, and give God the glory of it. Such persons are in danger to *go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared and taken,* and to have Christ *a stone of stumbling* to them, that shall be an occasion of their ruin; while he is to others *a sanctuary,* and a *sure foundation.*

The prophet *Isaiah,* (Isa. xxix. 14.) speaks of God's proceeding to do a marvellous work and a wonder, which should stumble and confound the wisdom of the wise and prudent; which the Apostle in Acts xiii. 41. applies to the glorious work of salvation wrought in those days by the redemption of Christ, and that glorious outpouring of the spirit to apply it which followed. The prophet in the context of that place in Isa. xxix. speaking of the same thing, and of the prophets and rulers and seers, those wise and prudent whose eyes God had closed, says to them, ver. 9. *Stay your selves and wonder.* In the original it is, *Be ye slow and wonder.* I leave it to others to consider whether it be not natural to interpret it thus, "Wonder at this *marvellous work;* let it be a strange thing, a great mystery that you know not what to make of, and that you are very slow and backward to acknowledge, long delaying to come to a determination concerning it." And what persons are in danger, and are thus slow to acknowledge God in such a work, we learn from the Apostle in that forementioned place, Acts xiii. 41. *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.*

The church of Christ is called upon greatly to rejoice, when at any time Christ remarkably appears, coming to his church, to carry on the work of salvation, to inlarge his own kingdom, and to deliver poor souls out of the pit wherein there is no water. Zech. ix. 9, 10, 11. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation:—His dominion shall be from sea to sea.—As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.* Christ was pleased to give a notable typical or symbolical representation of such a great event as is

spoken of in that prophecy, in his solemn entry into the literal Jerusalem, which was a type of the church or daughter of Zion; probably intending it as a figure and prelude of that great actual fulfilment of this prophecy, that was to be after his ascension, by the pouring out of the spirit in the days of the Apostles, and that more full accomplishment that should be in the latter ages of the Christian church. We have an account, that when Christ made this his solemn entry into Jerusalem, and the whole multitude of the disciples were rejoicing and praising God, with loud voices, for all the mighty works that they had seen, the Pharisees from among the multitude said to Christ, *Master, rebuke thy disciples;* but we are told, Luke xix. 39, 40. Christ *answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.* Signifying, that if Christ's professing disciples should be unaffected on such an occasion, and should not appear openly to acknowledge and rejoice in the glory of God therein appearing, it would manifest such fearful hardness of heart, that the very stones would condemn them. Should not this make those consider, who have held their peace so long since Christ has come to our Zion having salvation, and so wonderfully manifested his glory in this mighty work of his spirit, and so many of his disciples have been *rejoicing and praising God with loud voices?*

It must be acknowledged, that so great and wonderful a work of God's spirit, is a work wherein God's hand is remarkably *lifted up,* and wherein he displays his *majesty,* and shows great *favour* and mercy to sinners, in the glorious opportunity he gives them, and by which he makes our land to become much more a *land of uprightness.* Therefore that place, Isa. xxvi. 10. 11. shows the great danger of not seeing God's hand, and acknowledging his glory and majesty in such a work; *Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: In the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.*

SECT. II.

The Latter Day Glory, is probably to begin in America.

It is not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning or, at least, a prelude of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in scripture, which, in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the world of mankind. If we consider how long since the things foretold as what should precede this great event, have been accomplished; and how long this event has been expected by the church of God, and thought to be nigh by the most eminent men of God in the church; and withal consider what the state of things now is, and has for a considerable time been, in the church of God, and the world of mankind; we cannot reasonably think otherwise, than that the beginning of this great work of God must be near. And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in *America*.—It is signified that it shall begin in some very remote part of the world, with which other parts have no communication but by navigation, in Isa. lx. 9. *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of* Tarshish *first, to bring my sons from far.* It is exceeding manifest that this chapter is a prophecy of the prosperity of the church, in its most glorious state on earth, in the latter days; and I cannot think that any thing else can be here intended but *America* by the isles that are far off, from whence the first-born sons of that glorious day shall be brought. Indeed, by *the isles*, in prophecies of gospel-times, is very often meant *Europe*. It is so in prophecies of that great spreading of the gospel that should be soon after Christ's time, because it was far separated from that part of the world where the church of God had till then been, by the sea. But *this* prophecy cannot have respect to the conversion of *Europe*, in the time of that great work of God, in the primitive ages of the Christian church; for it was not fulfilled then. The isles and ships of *Tarshish*, thus understood, did not wait for God first; that glorious work did not begin in *Europe*, but in *Jerusalem*, and had for a considerable time been very wonderfully carried on in *Asia*, before it reached *Europe*. And as it is not *that* work of God which is chiefly intended in this chapter, but some more glorious work that should be in the latter ages of the Christian church; therefore, some other part of the world is here in-

tended by the isles, that should be, as *Europe* then was, far separated from that part of the world where the church had before been, and with which it can have no communication but by the ships of *Tarshish*. And what is chiefly intended is not the *British* isles, nor any isles near the other continent; for they are spoken of as at a great distance from that part of the world where the church had till then been. This prophecy therefore seems plainly to point out *America*, as the first-fruits of that glorious day.

God has made as it were two worlds here below, two great habitable continents, far separated one from the other: The latter is as it were now but newly created; it has been, till of late, wholly the possession of *Satan*, the church of God having never been in it, as it has been in the other continent, from the beginning of the world. This new world is probably now discovered, that the new and most glorious state of God's church on earth might commence there; that God might in it begin a new world in a spiritual respect, when he creates the *new heavens* and *new earth*.

God has already put that honour upon the other continent, that Christ was born there literally, and there made the *purchase of redemption*. So, as Providence observes a kind of equal distribution of things it is not unlikely that the great spiritual birth of Christ, and the most glorious *application of redemption*, is to begin in this. The elder sister brought forth *Judah*, of whom Christ came, and so she was the mother of Christ; but the younger sister, after long barrenness, brought forth *Joseph* and *Benjamin*, the beloved children. *Joseph* who had the most glorious apparel, the coat of many colours; who was separated from his brethren, and was exalted to great glory out of a dark dungeon—who fed and saved the world when ready to perish with famine, and was as a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches ran over the wall, and was blessed with all manner of blessings and precious things of heaven and earth, through the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush—was, as by the horns of an unicorn, to push the people together, to the ends of the earth, *i. e.* conquer the world. See Gen. xlix. 22, &c. and Deut. xxxiii. 13, &c. And *Benjamin*, whose mess was five times so great as that of any of his brethren, and to whom Joseph, that type of Christ, gave wealth and raiment far beyond all the rest, Gen. xlv. 22.

The other continent hath slain Christ, and has from age to age shed the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, and has often been as it were deluged with the church's blood. God

has therefore probably reserved the honour of building the glorious temple to the daughter that has not shed so much blood, when those times of the peace, prosperity and glory of the church, typified by the reign of Solomon, shall commence.

The *Gentiles* first received the true religion from the *Jews:* God's church of ancient times had been among them, and Christ was of them. But, that there may be a kind of equality in the dispositions of Providence, God has so ordered it, that when the *Jews* come to be admitted to the benefits of the evangelical dispensation, and to receive their highest privileges of all, they should receive the gospel from the *Gentiles.* Though Christ was of them, yet they have been guilty of crucifying him; it is therefore the will of God, that the Jews should not have the honour of communicating the blessings of the kingdom of God in its most glorious state to the *Gentiles;* but on the contrary, they shall receive the gospel in the beginning of that glorious day from the *Gentiles.* In some analogy to this, I apprehend, God's dealings will be with the two continents. *America* has received the true religion of the old continent; the church of ancient times has been there, and Christ is from thence. But that there may be an equality, and inasmuch as that continent has crucified Christ, they shall not have the honour of communicating religion in its most glorious state to us, but we to them.

The old continent has been the source and original of mankind, in several respects. The first parents of mankind dwelt there; and there dwelt *Noah* and his sons; there the second *Adam* was born, and crucified and raised again: And 'tis probable that, in some measure to balance these things, the most glorious renovation of the world shall originate from the new continent, and the church of God in that respect be from hence. And so it is probable that will come to pass in spirituals, which has taken place in temporals, with respect to *America;* that whereas, till of late, the world was supplied with its silver, and gold, and earthly treasures from the old continent, now it is supplied chiefly from the new; so the course of things in spiritual respects will be in like manner turned.—And it is worthy to be noted, that *America* was discovered about the time of the reformation, or but little before: Which reformation was the first thing that God did towards the glorious renovation of the world, after it had sunk into the depths of darkness and ruin, under the great antichristian apostacy. So that, as soon as this new world stands forth in view, God presently goes about doing some great thing in order to make way for the introduc-

tion of the church's latter-day glory—which is to have its first seat in, and is to take its rise from, that new world.

It is agreeable to God's manner, when he accomplishes any glorious work in the world, in order to introduce a new and more excellent state of his church, to begin where no foundation had been already laid, that the power of God might be the more conspicuous; that the work might appear to be entirely God's, and be more manifestly a creation out of nothing; agreeable to *Hos.* i. 10. *And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.* When God is about to turn the earth into a paradise, he does not begin his work where there is some good growth already, but in the wilderness, where nothing grows, and nothing is to be seen but dry sand and barren rocks; that the light may shine out of darkness, the world be replenished from emptiness, and the earth watered by springs from a droughty desert; agreeable to many prophecies of scripture, as *Isa.* xxxii. 15. *Until the spirit be poured from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field.* And chap. xli. 18. 19. *I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the Cedar, the Shittah-tree, and the Myrtle, and Oyl-tree: I will set in the desert the Fir-tree, and the Pine, and the Box-tree together.* And chap. xliii. 20. *I will give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.* And many other parallel scriptures might be mentioned. Now as, when God is about to do some great work for his church, his manner is to begin at the lower end; so, when he is about to renew the whole habitable earth, it is probable that he will begin in this utmost, meanest, youngest and weakest part of it, where the church of God has been planted last of all; and so the first shall be last, and the last first; and that will be fulfilled in an eminent manner in *Isa.* xxiv. 19. *From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous.*

There are several things that seem to me to argue, that the sun of righteousness, the sun of the new heavens and new earth, when he rises—and *comes forth as the bridegroom* of his church, *rejoicing as a strong man to run his race, having his going forth from the end of heaven, and his circuit to the end of it, that nothing may be hid from the light and heat of it,**—shall

* It is evident that the holy spirit, in those expressions in *Psal.* xix. 4. 6. has respect to something else besides the natural sun, and that a regard is had to the

rise in the west, contrary to the course of things in the old heavens and earth. The movements of providence shall in that day be so wonderfully altered in many respects, that God will as it were change the course of nature, in answer to the prayers of his church; as he caused the sun to go from the west to the east, when he promised to do such great things for his church; a deliverance out of the hand of the King of *Assyria*, is often used by the prophet *Isaiah*, as a type of the glorious deliverance of the church from her enemies in the latter days. The resurrection as it were of *Hezekiah*, the king and captain of the church, (as he is called, 2 *Kings* xx. 5.) is given as an earnest of the church's resurrection and salvation, *Isa.* xxxviii. 6. and is a type of the resurrection of Christ. At the same time there is a resurrection of the sun, or coming back and rising again from the west, whither it had gone down; which is also a type of the sun of righteousness. The sun was brought back ten degrees; which probably brought it to the meridian. The sun of righteousness has long been going down from east to west; and probably when the time comes of the church's deliverance from her enemies, so often typified by the *Assyrians*, the light will rise in the west, till it shines through aut world like the sun in its meridian brightness.

The same seems also to be represented by the course of the waters of the sanctuary, *Ezek.* xlvii. which was from west to east; which waters undoubtedly represented the holy spirit, in the progress of his saving influences, in the latter ages of the world: for it is manifest, that the whole of those last chapters of *Ezekiel* treat concerning the glorious state of the church at that time. And if we may suppose that this glorious work of God shall begin in any part of *America*, I think, if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of *New-England*, it must needs appear the most likely, of all *American* colonies, to be the place whence this work shall principally take its rise. And, if these things be so, it gives us more abundant reason to hope that what is now seen in *America*, and especially in *New-England*, may prove the dawn of that glorious day: and the very uncommon and wonderful circumstances and events of this work, seem to me strongly to argue that God intends it as the beginning or forerunner of something vastly great.

sun of righteousness, who by his light converts the soul, makes wise the simple, enlightens the eyes, and rejoices the heart; and by his preached gospel enlightens and warms the world of mankind; by the Psalmist's own application in *ver.* 7. and the Apostle's application of *ver.* 4. in *Rom.* x. 18.

SECT. III.

The Danger of not Acknowledging and Encouraging, and especially of Deriding this Work.

I HAVE thus long insisted on this point, because, if these things are so, it greatly manifests how much it behoves us to encourage and promote this work, and how dangerous it will be to forbear so doing. It is very dangerous for God's professing people to lie still, and not to come to the help of the Lord, whenever he remarkably pours out his spirit, to carry on the work of redemption in the application of it; but above all, when he comes forth, to introduce that happy day of God's power and salvation, so often spoken of. That is especially the appointed season of the application of redemption. The appointed time of Christ's reign. The reign of Satan as god of this world lasts till then; but afterwards will be the proper time of actual redemption, or new creation, as is evident by *Isa.* lxv. 17, 18, &c. and lxvi. 12. and *Rev.* xxi. 1. All the outpourings of the spirit of God before this, are as it were by way of anticipation. There was indeed a glorious season of the application of redemption in the first ages of the christian church, which began at *Jerusalem*, on the day of *Pentecost;* but that was not the proper time of ingathering. It was only as it were the feast of first-fruits; the ingathering is at the end of the year, or in the last ages of the christian church, as is represented, *Rev.* xiv. 14—16. and will probably as much exceed what was in the first ages of the christian church, though that filled the *Roman* empire, as that exceeded all that had been before, under the Old Testament, confined only to the land of *Judea.*

The great danger of not appearing openly to acknowledge, rejoice in, and promote that great work of God, in bringing in that glorious harvest, is represented in *Zech.* xiv. 16, 17, 18, 19. *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left, of all the nations which come against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem, to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of* Egypt *go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of* Egypt, *and the punishment of all nations that*

come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. It is evident by all the context, that the glorious day of the church of God in the latter ages of the world, is the time spoken of. The *feast of tabernacles* here seems to signify that glorious spiritual feast which God shall then make for his church, the same that is spoken of *Isa.* xxv. 6. and the great spiritual rejoicings of God's people at that time. There were three great feasts in *Israel*, at which all the males were appointed to go up to *Jerusalem*; the feast of the *passover*; and the feast of the *first-fruits*, or the feast of *Pentecost*; and the feast of *ingathering*, at the end of the year, or the feast of *tabernacles.* In the first of these, *viz. the feast of the passover*, was represented the *purchase* of redemption by Jesus Christ; for the Paschal lamb was slain at the time of that feast. The other two that followed it were to represent the two great seasons of the *application* of the purchased redemption. In the former of them, *viz. the feast of the first-fruits*, which was called the feast of *Pentecost*, was represented that time of the outpouring of the spirit in the first ages of the christian church, for the bringing in the *first fruits* of Christ's redemption, which began at *Jerusalem* on the day of *Pentecost.* The other, which was the feast of *ingathering*, at the end of the year—which the children of *Israel* were appointed to keep on occasion of their gathering in their corn and their wine, and all the fruit of their land, and was called the *feast of tabernacles*—represented the other more joyful and glorious season of the application of Christ's redemption, which is to be in the latter days. Then will be the great day of ingathering of the elect, the proper and appointed time of gathering in God's fruits, when the angel of the covenant shall thrust in his sickle, and gather the harvest of the earth; and the clusters of the vine of the earth shall also be gathered. This was upon many accounts the greatest feast of the three. There were much greater tokens of rejoicings in this feast than any other. The people then dwelt in booths of green boughs, and were commanded to take boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and to rejoice before the Lord their God. This represents the flourishing, beautiful, pleasant state of the church, rejoicing in God's grace and love, and triumphing over all her enemies. The tabernacle of God was first set up among the children of *Israel*, at the time of the *feast of tabernacles*; but, in that glorious time of the christian church, God will above all other times set up his tabernacle amongst men, *Rev.* xxi. 3. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, The tabernacle of*

God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

The world is supposed to have been created about the time of year wherein the *Feast of Tabernacles* was appointed; so, in that glorious time God will create a new heaven and a new earth. The temple of *Solomon* was dedicated at the time of the *Feast of Tabernacles*, when God descended in a pillar of cloud, and dwelt in the temple; so, at this happy time, the temple of God shall be gloriously built up in the world, and God shall in a wonderful manner come down from heaven to dwell with his church. Christ is supposed to have been born at the feast of tabernacles; so, at the commencement of that glorious day, Christ shall be born; then, above all other times, shall *the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, that is in travail, and pained to be delivered, bring forth her son, to rule all nations*, Rev. xii. The *feast of tabernacles* was the last feast that *Israel* had in the whole year, before the face of the earth was destroyed by the winter; presently after the rejoicings of that feast were past, a tempestuous season began, Acts xxvii. 9. *Sailing was now dangerous, because the feast was now already past.* So this great feast of the Christian church will be the last feast she shall have on earth; soon after it is past, this lower world will be destroyed. At the *feast of tabernacles*, *Israel* left their houses to dwell in booths or green tents; which signifies the great weanedness of God's people from the world, as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and their great joy therein. *Israel* were prepared for the *feast of tabernacles* by the *feast of trumpets*, and the day of atonement, both in the same month; so, way shall be made for the joy of the church of God, in its glorious state on earth, by the extraordinary preaching of the gospel, deep repentance and humiliation for past sins, and for the great and long-continued deadness and carnality of the visible church. Christ, at the great *feast of tabernacles*, stood in *Jerusalem*, and *cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters:* Signifying the extraordinary freedom and riches of divine grace towards sinners at that day, and the extraordinary measures of the holy spirit that shall be then given; agreeable to *Rev.* xxi. 6. and xxii. 17.

It is threatened (*Zech.* xiv.) that those who at that time shall not come to keep this feast, *i. e.* that shall not acknowledge God's glorious works, praise his name, and rejoice with his

people—but who should stand at a distance, as unbelieving and disaffected—*upon them shall be no rain;* they shall have no share in the shower of divine blessing that shall then descend on the earth, the spiritual rain spoken of, *Isa.* xliv. 3. but God would give them over to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. The curse is denounced against such, in a manner still more awful, *v.* 12. *And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord shall smite all the people that have fought against* Jerusalem: *Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.* Here also, in all probability, is intended a spiritual judgment, or a plague and curse from God upon the soul, rather than upon the body; that such persons, who at that time shall oppose God's people in his work, shall in an extraordinary manner be given over to a state of spiritual death and ruin, that they shall remarkably appear dead while alive, and shall be as walking rotten corpses while they go about amongst men. The great danger of not joining with God's people at that glorious day is also represented, *Isa.* lx. 12. *For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.*

Most of the great temporal deliverances wrought for *Israel* of old, were typical of the great spiritual works of God for the salvation of souls, and the deliverance and prosperity of his church, in gospel days; and especially they represented that greatest of all deliverances of God's church in the latter days; which is above all others the proper season of actual redemption of Mens' souls. But it may be observed, that if any appeared to oppose God's work in those great temporal deliverances; or if there were any of his professing people, who on such occasions lay still, stood at a distance, or did not arise and acknowledge God in his work, and appear to promote it; it was what in a remarkable manner incensed God's anger, and brought his curse upon such persons.—When God wrought that great work of bringing the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, (which was a type of God's delivering his church out of the spiritual *Egypt* at the time of the fall of *Antichrist*, as is evident by *Rev.* xi. 8. and xv. 3.) how highly did he resent it, when the *Amalekites* appeared as opposers in that affair? and how dreadfully did he curse them for it? *Exod.* xvii. 14, 15, 16. *And the Lord said unto* Moses, *Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of* Joshua; *for I will utterly put out the remembrance of* Amalek *from under heaven. And* Moses *built an altar, and called the name of it* Jehova-Nissi. *For he said, Be-*

cause the Lord will have war with Amalek *from generation to generation.* And accordingly we find that God remembered it a long time after, 1 *Sam.* xv. 3. And how highly did God resent it in the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, that they did not lend a helping hand, and encourage and promote the affair? *Deut.* xxiii. 3, 4. *An* Ammonite *or* Moabite *shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation, shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever: Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of* Egypt. And how were the children of *Reuben*, and the children of *Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manasseh* threatened, if they did not go and help their brethren in their wars against the *Canaanites? Num.* xxxii. 20, 21, 21, 23. *And* Moses *said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, and will go all of you armed over* Jordan *before the Lord, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, and the land be subdued before the Lord; then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before* Israel; *and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.*

That was a glorious work which God wrought for *Israel*, when he delivered them from the *Canaanites*, by the hand of *Deborah* and *Barak*. Almost every thing about it shewed a remarkable hand of God. It was a prophetess, one immediately inspired by God, that called the people to the battle, and conducted them in the whole affair. The people seem to have been miraculously animated and encouraged in the matter, when they willingly offered themselves, and gathered together to the battle; they jeoparded their lives in the high places of the field, without being pressed or hired, when one would have thought they should have but little courage for such an undertaking. For what could a number of poor, weak, defenceless slaves do, without *a shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand of them*, to go against a great prince, with his mighty host, and nine hundred chariots of iron? And the success wonderfully shewed the hand of God; which makes *Deborah* exultingly to say, *Judg.* v. 31. *O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!* Christ with his heavenly host was engaged in that battle; and therefore it is said, *v.* 20. *They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against* Sisera. The work of God therefore, in this victory and deliverance which Christ and his host wrought for *Israel*, was a type of what he will accomplish for his church in that great last conflict of the church with her open enemies,

that shall introduce the church's latter-day glory; as appears by *Rev.* xvi. 16 (speaking of that great battle) *And he gathered them together into a place, called in the* Hebrew *tongue*, Armageddon, *i. e.* the mountain of *Megiddo;* alluding, as is supposed by expositors, to the place where the battle was fought with the host of *Sisera*, Judg. v. 19. *The kings came and fought, the kings of* Canaan, *in* Taanach, *by the waters of* Megiddo. Which can signify nothing else than that this battle, which Christ and his church shall have with their enemies, is the antitype of the battle that was fought there. But what a dreadful curse from Christ did some of God's professing people *Israel* bring upon themselves, by lying still at that time, and not putting to an helping hand? *Judg.* v. 23. *Curse ye* Meroz, *said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* The angel of the Lord was the captain of the host; he that had led *Israel*, and fought for them in that battle, who is very often called *the angel of the Lord*, in scripture; the same that appeared to *Joshua* with a sword drawn in his hand, and told him that he was *come as the captain of the host of the Lord:* and the same glorious captain who is represented as leading forth his hosts to that battle, of which this was the type, *Rev.* xix. 11, *&c.* It seems the inhabitants of *Meroz* were unbelieving concerning this great work; they would not hearken to *Deborah's* pretences, nor did it enter into them that such a poor defenceless company should ever prevail against those that were so mighty. They did not acknowledge the hand of God, and therefore stood at a distance, and did nothing to promote the work: but what a bitter curse from God did they bring upon themselves by it!—It is very probable that one great reason why the inhabitants of *Meroz* were so unbelieving concerning this work, was, that they argued *a priori;* they did not like the beginning of it, it being a woman that first led the way, and had the chief conduct in the affair; nor could they believe that such despicable instruments, as a company of unarmed slaves, were ever like to effect so great a thing; and pride and unbelief wrought together, in not being willing to follow *Deborah* to the battle.

It was another glorious work of God that he wrought for *Israel*, in the victory that was obtained by *Gideon* over the *Midianites* and *Amalekites*, and the children of the east, when they came up against *Israel* like grasshoppers, a multitude that could not be numbered. This also was a remarkable type of the victory of Christ and his church over his enemies, by the pouring

out of the spirit with the preached gospel; as is evident by the manner in which *Gideon* was immediately directed of God, which was not by human sword or bow, but by blowing of trumpets, and by lights in earthen vessels. We read that, on this occasion, *Gideon* called the people together to help in this great affair; and that accordingly great numbers resorted to him, and came to the help of the Lord, *Judg.* vii. 23, 24. But the inhabitants of *Succoth* and *Penuel* were unbelieving, and would not acknowledge the hand of God in that work, though it was so great and wonderful, nor would they join to promote it. *Gideon* desired their help, when he was pursuing after *Zeba* and *Zalmunna;* but they despised his pretences, and his confidence of the Lord being on his side, to deliver those two great princes into the hands of such a despicable company as he and his three hundred men, and would not own the work of God, nor afford *Gideon* any assistance. God proceeded in this work in a way that was exceeding cross to their pride. And they also refused to own the work, because they argued *a priori;* they could not believe that God would do such great things by such a despicable instrument, one of such a poor, mean family in *Manasseh*, and he the least in his father's house; and the company that was with him appeared very wretched, being but three hundred men, and they weak and faint. But we see how they suffered for their folly, in not acknowledging and appearing to promote this work of God: *Gideon*, when he returned from the victory, *took them, and taught them with the briers and thorns of the wilderness, and beat down the tower of* Penuel, (he brought down their pride and their false confidence) *and slew the men of the city*, Judg. viii. This in all probability *Gideon* did, as moved and directed by the angel of the Lord, that is Christ, who first called him, and sent him forth in this battle, and instructed and directed him in the whole affair.

The return of the ark of God to dwell in *Zion*, in the midst of the land of *Israel*, after it had been long absent—first in the land of the *Philistines*, and then in *Kirjath-jearim*, in the utmost borders of the land—strikingly represented the return of God to a professing people, in the spiritual tokens of his presence, after long absence from them. The ark ascending up into a mountain, typified Christ's ascension into heaven. It is evident by the Psalms that were penned on that occasion, especially the 68th *Psalm*, that the exceeding rejoicings of *Israel* on that occasion represented the joy of the church of Christ on his returning to it, after it has been in a low and dark state, to revive his work, bringing his people *back*, as it were, *from* Ba-

shan, *and from the depth of the sea;* scattering their spiritual enemies, and causing that *though they had lien among the pots, yet they should be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold;* and giving the blessed tokens of his presence in his house, that his people may *see the goings of God their king in the sanctuary.* The gifts which *David,* with such royal bounty, distributed amongst the people on that occasion, (2 *Sam.* vi. 18, 19. and 1 *Chron.* xvi. 2, 3.) represent spiritual blessings that Christ liberally sends down on his church, by the outpourings of his spirit. See *Psalm* lxviii. 1, 3, 13, 18—24. And we have an account how that all the people, from *Shihor* of *Egypt,* even unto the entering in of *Hemath,* gathered together, and appeared to join and assist in that great affair; and that all Israel *brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord, with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps,* 1 Chron. xiii. 2, 5. and xv. 28. And not only the men, but the women of *Israel,* the daughters of *Zion* appeared, as publickly joining in the praises and rejoicings on that occasion, 2 *Sam.* vi. 19. But we read of one of *David's* wives, even *Michal, Saul's* daughter, whose heart was not engaged in the affair, and did not appear with others to rejoice and praise God on this occasion, but kept away, and stood at a distance, as disaffected, and disliking the management. She despised and ridiculed the transports and extraordinary manifestations of joy; and the curse that she brought upon herself by it was that of being barren to the day of her death. Let this be a warning to us: let us take heed, in this day of the bringing up of the ark of God, that, while we are in visibility and profession the spouse of the spiritual *David,* we do not shew ourselves to be indeed the children of false-hearted and rebellious *Saul,* by our standing aloof, and our not joining in the joy and praises of the day, disliking and despising the joys and affections of God's people because they are so high in degree, and so bring the curse of perpetual barrenness upon our souls.

Let us take heed that we be not like the son of the bond-woman, born after the flesh, that persecuted him that was born after the spirit, and mocked at the feasting and rejoicings that were made for *Isaac* when he was weaned; lest we should be cast out of the family of *Abraham,* as he was, *Gen.* xxi. 8, 9. That affair contained spiritual mysteries, and was typical of things that come to pass in these days of the gospel; as is evident by the apostle's testimony, *Gal.* iv. 22, &c. And particularly it seems to have been typical of two things;

First, The weaning of the church from its milk of carnal ordinances, ceremonies, shadows, and beggarly elements upon the coming of Christ, and pouring out of the spirit in the days of the apostles. The church of Christ, in the times of the Old Testament, was in its minority, even as a babe; and the apostle tells us that babes must be fed with milk, and not with strong meat: but when God weaned his church from these carnal ordinances, on the ceasing of the legal dispensation, a glorious gospel-feast was provided for souls, and God fed his people with spiritual dainties, filled them with the spirit, and gave them joy in the Holy Ghost. *Ishmael* in mocking at the time of *Isaac's* feast, by the apostle's testimony, represented the carnal *Jews*, the children of the literal *Jerusalem*, who, when they beheld the rejoicings of Christians in their spiritual and evangelical privileges, were filled with envy, deriding, contradicting and blaspheming, (*Acts* ii. 13. and *chap.* xiii. 45. and xviii. 6.) and therefore were cast out of the family of *Abraham*, and out of the land of *Canaan*, to wander through the earth.

Secondly, This weaning of *Isaac* seems also to represent the conversion of sinners, which is several times represented in scripture by the weaning of a child; as in *Psal.* cxxxi. and *Isa.* xxviii. 9. because in conversion the soul is weaned from the enjoyments of the world, which are as it were the breast of our mother earth; and is also weaned from the covenant of our first parents, which we as naturally hang upon, as a child on its mother's breast. And the great feast that *Abraham* made on that occasion represents the spiritual feast, the heavenly privileges, and holy joys and comforts, which God gives to souls at their conversion. Now is a time when God in a remarkable manner is bestowing the blessings of such a feast: Let every one take heed that he do not now shew himself to be the son of the bond-woman, and born after the flesh, by standing and deriding, with mocking *Ismael;* lest they be cast out as he was, and it be said concerning them, *These sons of the bond-woman shall not be heirs with the sons of the free woman.* Do not let us stumble at these things, because they are so great and extraordinary; for *if* we *have run with the footmen, and they have wearied* us, *how shall* we *contend with horses?* There is doubtless a time coming when God will accomplish things vastly greater and more extraordinary than these.

And that we may be warned not to continue doubting and unbelieving concerning this work, because of the extraordinary degree of it, and the suddenness and swiftness of the accomplishment of the great things that pertain to it; let us consider

the example of the unbelieving lord in *Samaria*, who could not believe so extraordinary a work of God to be accomplished so suddenly as was declared to him. The prophet *Elisha* foretold that the great famine in *Samaria* should very suddenly, even in one day, be turned into an extraordinary plenty; but the work was too great and too sudden for him to believe: says he, *If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?* And the curse that he brought upon himself by it was, that he saw it with his eyes, and did not eat thereof, but miserably perished, and was trodden down as the mire of the streets, when others were feasting and rejoicing, 2 *Kings* vii.

When God redeemed his people from their *Babylonish* captivity, and they rebuilt *Jerusalem*, it was, as is universally owned, a remarkable type of the spiritual redemption of God's church; and particularly of the great deliverance of the Christian church from spiritual *Babylon*, and their rebuilding the spiritual *Jerusalem*, in the latter days; and therefore they are often spoken of as one by the prophets. And this probably was the main reason that it was so ordered in Providence, and particularly noted in scripture, that the children of *Israel*, on that occasion, kept the greatest *Feast of tabernacles* that ever had been kept in *Israel* since the days of *Joshua*, when the people were first settled in *Canaan*. (*Neh.* viii. 16, 17.) For at that time happened that restoration of *Israel*, which had the greatest resemblance of that great restoration of the church of God, of which the *Feast of tabernacles* was the type, of any that had been since *Joshua* first brought the people out of the wilderness, and settled them in the good land. But we read of some that opposed the *Jews* in that affair, weakened their hands, ridiculed God's people, the instruments employed in that work, despised their hope, and made as though their confidence was little more than a shadow, and would utterly fail them: *What do these feeble Jews?* (say they) *will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.* Let not us be in any measure like them, lest it be said to us, as *Nehemiah* said to them, *Neh.* ii. 20. *We his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in* Jerusalem. And lest we bring *Nehemiah's* imprecations upon us, *chap.* iv. 5. *Cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee; for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.*

As persons will greatly expose themselves to the curse of God, by opposing, or standing at a distance, and keeping silence at such a time as this; so for persons to arise, and readily to acknowledge God, and honour him in such a work, and cheerfully and vigorously to exert themselves to promote it, will be to put themselves much in the way of the divine blessing. What a mark of honour does God put upon those in *Israel*, that willingly offered themselves, and came to the help of the Lord against the mighty, when the angel of the Lord led forth his armies, and they fought from heaven against *Sisera*? *Judg.* v. 2, 9, 14—18. And what a great blessing is pronounced on *Jael*, the wife of *Heber* the *Kenite*, for her appearing on the Lord's side, and for what she did to promote that work? *Blessed above women shall* Jael *the wife of* Heber *the* Kenite *be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.* And what a blessing is pronounced on those which shall have any hand in the destruction of *Babylon*, which was the head city of the kingdom of *Satan*, and of the enemies of the church of God? *Psal.* cxxxvii. 9. *Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.* What a particular and honourable notice is taken, in the records of God's word, of those that arose and appeared as *David's* helpers, to introduce him into the kingdom of *Israel*? 1 *Chron.* xii. The host of those who thus came to the help of the Lord, in that glorious revolution in *Israel*, by which the kingdom of that great type of the *Messiah* was set up in *Israel*, is compared to the host of God, (*v.* 22.) *At that time, day by day, there came to* David *to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.* And doubtless it was intended to be a type of the host that shall appear with the spiritual *David*, as his helpers, when he shall come to set up his kingdom in the world; the same host that we read of, *Rev.* xiv. 14. The spirit of God then pronounced a special blessing on *David's* helpers, as co-workers with God, *v.* 18. *Then the spirit came upon* Amasai, *who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we,* David, *and on thy side, thou son of* Jesse: *Peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee.* So we may conclude, that God will much more give his blessing to such as come to the help of the Lord, when he sets his own dear Son as king on his holy hill of *Zion*. They shall be received by Christ, and he will put peculiar honour upon them, as *David* did on those his helpers; as we have an account in the following words, *v.* 18. *Then* David *received them, and made them captains of the band.* It is particularly noted of those

those that came to *David* to *Hebron*, ready armed to the war, to turn the kingdom of *Saul* to him, according to the word of the Lord, that *they were men that had understanding of the times, to know what* Israel *ought to do*, v. 23. and 32. Wherein they differed from the *Pharisees* and other *Jews*, who did not come to the help of the Lord at the time that the great son of *David* appeared to set up his kingdom in the world. These Christ condemns, because they had not *understanding of those times*, Luke xii. 56. *Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern these times;* So it always will be, when Christ remarkably appears on earth, on a design of setting up his kingdom here; many will not understand the times, nor what *Israel* ought to do, and so will not come to turn about the kingdom to *David*.

The favourable notice that God will take of such as appear to promote the work of God, at such a time as this, may also be argued from such a very particular notice being taken in the sacred records, of those that helped in rebuilding the wall of *Jerusalem*, upon the return from the *Babylonish* captivity, *Nehem.* chap. iii.

SECT. IV.

The obligations of Rulers, Ministers, and all sorts to promote this Work.

At such a time as this, when God is setting his king on his holy hill of *Zion*, or establishing his dominion, or shewing forth his regal glory from thence, he expects that his visible people, without exception, should openly appear to acknowledge him in such a work, and bow before him, and join with him. But especially does he expect this of civil *rulers:* God's eye is especially upon them, to see how they behave themselves on such occasion. When a new king comes to the throne, if he comes from abroad, and enters into his kingdom, and makes his solemn entry into the royal city, it is expected that all sorts should acknowledge him; but above all others is it expected that the great men, and public officers of the nation, should then make their appearance, and attend on their sovereign, with suitable congratulations, and manifestations of respect and loyalty. If such as these stand at a distance at such a time, it will be much more noticed; and will awaken the prince's jealousy and displeasure much more, than such a behaviour in the common people. And thus it is, when that eternal son

of God, and heir of the world—by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice, and whom his father has appointed to be king of kings—comes as it were from far, and in the spiritual tokens of his presence enters into the royal city *Zion*. God has his eye at such a time, especially, upon those princes, nobles and judges of the earth, spoken of, *Prov.* viii. 16. to see how they behave themselves, whether they bow to him, who is made the head of all principality and power. This is evident by *Psal.* ii. 6, 7, 10—12. *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of* Zion. *I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.—Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.* There seems to be in the words an allusion to a new king coming to the throne, and making his solemn entry into the royal city, when it is expected that all, especially men in public office and authority, should manifest their loyalty, by some open and visible token of respect, *by the way*, as he passes along; and those that refuse or neglect it, are in danger of being immediately struck down, and perishing *from the way*, by which the king goes in solemn procession.

The day wherein God, in an eminent manner, sends forth the rod of Christ's strength out of *Zion*, that he may rule in the midst of his enemies, the day of his power wherein his people shall be made willing, is also eminently a day of his wrath, especially to such rulers as oppose him, or will not bow to him. It will prove a day wherein he *shall strike through kings, and fill the places with the dead bodies, and wound the heads over many countries*, Psal. cx. And thus it is, that when the Son of God *girds his sword upon his thigh, with his glory and his majesty, and in his majesty rides prosperously, because of truth, meekness and righteousness, his right hand teaches him terrible things.* They were the princes of *Succoth* especially who suffered punishment, when the inhabitants of that city refused to come to the help of the Lord. When *Gideon* was pursuing after *Zebah* and *Zalmunna*, we read that *Gideon* took the *elders* of the city, and thorns of the wilderness, and briers, and with them he taught the men of *Succoth*. It is especially noticed, that the rulers and chief men of *Israel*, were called upon to assist in the affair of bringing up the ark of God; they were chiefly consulted, and were principal in the management of the affair, 1 *Chron.* xiii. 1. *And* David *consulted with the captains of thousands and*

hundreds, and with every leader. And chap. xv. 25. *So* David *and the elders of* Israel, *and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord, out of the house of* Obed-Edom, *with joy.* So, 2 *Sam.* vi. 1. And so it was when the ark was brought into the temple, (1 *Kings* viii, 1, 3, and 2 *Chron.* v. 2, 4.)

And as rulers, by neglecting their duty at such a time, will especially expose themselves to God's great displeasure; so by fully acknowledging God in such a work, and by cheerfully and vigorously exerting themselves to promote it, they will especially be in the way of receiving peculiar honours and rewards at God's hands. It is noted of the princes of *Israel*, that *they* especially appeared to honour God with their princely offering, on occasion of setting up the tabernacle of God in the congregation of *Israel.* I have observed already that this was done at the time of the *feast of tabernacles*, and was a type of the tabernacle of God being with men, and his dwelling with men in the latter days. And with what abundant particularity is it noted of each prince, how much he offered to God on that occasion, for their everlasting honour, in the 7th chapter of *Numbers?* And so, with how much favour and honour does the spirit of God take notice of those princes in *Israel*, who came to the help of the Lord, in the war against *Sisera?* Judg. v. 9. *My heart is towards the governors of* Israel, *that offered themselves willingly among the people.* And, (*v.* 14.) *Out of* Machir *came down governors.* (*v.* 15.) *And the princes of* Issachar *were with* Deborah. And in the account we have of rebuilding the wall of *Jerusalem*, *Nehem* iii. it is particularly noted what a hand one and another of the rulers had in this affair; such a part of the wall was repaired by the ruler of the half part of *Jerusalem*, and such a part by the ruler of the other half part of *Jerusalem*, and such a part by the ruler of part of *Beth-haccerem*, and such a part by the ruler of part of *Mizpah*, and such a part by the ruler of the half part of *Bethzur;* and such a part by the ruler of *Mizpah*, *v.* 9—19. And there it is particularly noted of the rulers of one of the cities, that they put not their necks to the work of the Lord, though the common people did; and they are stigmatized for it in the sacred records, to their everlasting reproach, (*v.* 5.) *And next unto them the* Tekoites *repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord.* So the spirit of God, with special honour, takes notice of princes and rulers of several tribes, who assisted in bringing up the ark. *Psal.* lxviii. 27.

And I humbly desire it may be considered, whether we

have not reason to fear, that God is provoked with this land, because no more notice has been taken of the late glorious work by the civil authority; that no more has been done by them as a public acknowledgment of God in this work, and no more improvement of their authority to promote it. This might have been done, either by appointing a day of public thanksgiving to God for so unspeakable a mercy, or a day of fasting and prayer, to humble ourselves before God for our past deadness and unprofitableness under the means of grace, and to seek the continuance and increase of the tokens of his presence. Can it be pleasing to God, that the civil authority have not so much as entered upon any public consultation, what should be done to advance the present revival of religion, and great reformation that is begun in the land? Is there not danger that such a behaviour, at such a time, will be interpreted by God, as a denial of Christ? If but a new governor comes into a province, how much is there done, especially by those who are in authority, to put honour upon him? They arise, appear publicly, and go forth to meet, to address, and congratulate him, and with great expence to attend and aid him? If the authority of the province, on such an occasion, should all sit still, and say and do nothing, and take no notice of the arrival of their new governor, would there not be danger of its being interpreted by him, and his prince that sent him, as a denial of his authority, or a refusing to receive and honour him as their governor? And shall the head of the angels, and lord of the universe, come down from heaven, in so wonderful a manner, into the land; and shall all stand at a distance, and be silent and unactive on such an occasion? I would humbly recommend it to our rulers to consider whether God does not now say to them, *Be wise now, ye rulers; be instruced, ye judges of* New-England: *kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.*

It is prophesied, *Zech.* xii. 8. that, in the glorious day of the christian church, the house of *David*, or the rulers in God's *Israel, shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord, before his people.* But how can such rulers expect to have any share in this glorious promise, who do not so much as openly acknowledge God in the work of that spirit, by whom the glory of that day is to be accomplished? The days are coming, when the saints shall reign on earth, and all dominion and authority shall be given into their hands: but, if our rulers would partake of this honour, they ought, at such a day as this, to bring their glory

and honour into the spiritual *Jerusalem*, agreeable to *Rev.* xxi. 24.

But, above all others, is God's eye upon the *ministers* of the gospel, as expecting of them, that they should arise, acknowledge, and honour him in such a work as this, and do their utmost to encourage and promote it. For this is the very business to which they are called and devoted; it is the office to which they are appointed, as co-workers with Christ. They are his ambassadors and instruments, to awaken and convert sinners, and establish, build up and comfort saints; it is the business they have been solemnly charged with, before God, angels and men, and to which they have given up themselves by the most sacred vows. These especially are the officers of Christ's kingdom, who, above all other men upon earth, represent his person; into whose hands Christ has committed the sacred oracles, holy ordinances, and all his appointed means of grace, to be administered by them. They are the stewards of his household, into whose hands he has committed its provision; the immortal souls of men are committed to them, as a flock of sheep are committed to the care of a shepherd, or as a master commits a treasure to the care of a servant, of which he must give an account. It is expected of them, above all others, that they should have understanding of the times, and know what *Israel* ought to do; for it is their business to acquaint themselves with things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and to teach and inlighten others in the same. We who are employed in the sacred work of the gospel-ministry, are the watchmen over the city, to whom God has committed the keys of the gates of *Zion*; and if, when the rightful king of *Zion* comes to deliver his people from the enemy that oppresses them, we refuse to open the gates to him, how greatly shall we expose ourselves to his wrath? We are appointed to be the captains of the host in this war; and if a general will highly resent it in a private soldier, if he refuses to follow him when his banner is displayed, and his trumpet blown; how much more will he resent it in the officers of his army? The work of the gospel-ministry, consisting in the administration of God's word and ordinances, is the principal means that God has appointed for carrying on his work on the souls of men; and it is his revealed will, that whenever that glorious revival of religion, and reformation of the world, so often spoken of in his word, is accomplished, it should be principally by the labours of his ministers. Therefore, how heinous will it be in the sight of God, if, when a work of that nature is begun, we appear un-

believing, slow, backward and disaffected? There was no sort of persons among the *Jews* treated with such manifestations of God's great displeasure, and severe indignation, for not acknowledging Christ, and the work of his spirit, in the days of Christ and his Apostles, as the ministers of religion. See how Christ deals with them for it, *Matt.* xxiii. With what gentleness did Christ treat publicans and harlots, in comparison of them?

When the tabernacle was erected in the camp of *Israel*, and God came down from heaven to dwell in it, the priests were above all others concerned, and busily employed in the solemn transactions of that occasion, *Levit.* viii. and ix. And so it was at the time of the dedication of the temple by *Solomon*, (1 *Kings* viii. and 2 *Chron.* v. vi. and vii.) which was at the time of the feast of tabernacles, the same as when the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness. And the *Levites* were primarily and most immediately concerned in bringing up the ark into Mount *Zion*; the business properly belonged to them, and the ark was carried upon their shoulders, 1 *Chron.* xv. 2. *Then* David *said, none ought to carry the ark of God but the* Levites; *for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.* And (*v.* 11, 12.) *And* David *called for* Zadock *and* Abiathar *the priests, and for the* Levites, *for* Uriel, Asaiah, *and* Joel, Shemaiah, *and* Eliel, *and* Amminadab, *and said unto them, ye are the chief of the fathers of the* Levites; *sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of* Israel, *unto the place that I have prepared for it.* So we have an account that the priests led the way in rebuilding the wall of *Jerusalem*, after the *Babylonish* captivity, *Neh.* iii.

Though ministers preach never so good doctrine, and be never so painful and laborious in their work, yet if they shew to their people that they are not well-affected to this work, but are doubtful and suspicious of it, they will be very likely to do their people a great deal more hurt than good. For the very fame of such a great and extraordinary work of God, if their people were suffered to believe it to be his work, and the example of other towns together with what preaching they might hear occasionally, would be likely to have a much greater influence upon the minds of their people to awaken and animate them in religion, than all their labours with them. Besides, their ministers' opinion will not only beget in them a suspicion of the work they hear of abroad, whereby the mighty hand of God that appears in it, loses its influence upon their minds; but

it will also tend to create a suspicion of every thing of the like nature, that shall appear among themselves, as being something of the same distemper that is become so epidemical in the land. And what is this, in effect, but to create a supicion of all vital religion, and to put the people upon talking against and discouraging it, wherever it appears, and knocking it in the head as fast as it rises. We, who are ministers, by looking on this work from year to year with a displeased countenance, shall effectually keep the sheep from their pasture, instead of doing the part of shepherds by feeding them; and our people had a great deal better be without any settled minister at all, at such a day as this.

We who are in this sacred office had need to take heed what we do, and how we behave ourselves at this time: a less thing in a *minister* will hinder the work of God, than in *others*. If we are very silent, or say but little about the work, in our public prayers and preaching, or seem carefully to avoid speaking of it in our conversation, it will be interpreted by our people, that we who are their guides, to whom they are to have their eye for spiritual instruction, are suspicious of it; and this will tend to raise the same suspicions in them; and so the forementioned consequences will follow. And if we really hinder and stand in the way of the work of God, whose business above all others it is to promote it, how can we expect to partake of the glorious benefits of it? And, by keeping others from the benefit, we shall keep them out of heaven; therefore those awful words of Christ to the *Jewish* teachers, should be considered by us, *Matt.* xxiii. 13. *Wo unto you, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven;——for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in.* If we keep the sheep from their pasture, how shall we answer it to the great shepherd, who has bought the flock with his precious blood, and has committed the care of them to us? I would humbly desire of every minister that has thus long remained disaffected to this work, and has had contemptible thoughts of it, to consider whether he has not hitherto been like *Michal*, without any child, or at least in a great measure barren and unsuccessful in his work: I pray God it may not be a perpetual barrenness, as her's was.

The times of Christ's remarkably appearing in behalf of his church, to revive religion, and advance his kingdom in the world, are often spoken of in the prophecies of scripture, as times wherein he will remarkably execute judgments on such ministers or shepherds as do not feed the flock, but hinder their being fed, and so will deliver his flock from them. (*Jer.* xxiii.

throughout, and *Ezek.* xxxiv. throughout, and *Zech.* x. 3. and *Isa.* lvi. 7, 8, 9, &c.) I observed before, that Christ's solemn, magnificent entry into *Jerusalem*, seems to be designed as a representation of his glorious coming into his church, the spiritual *Jerusalem*; and therefore it is worthy to be noted, to our present purpose, that Christ at that time cast out all them who sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; signifying, that, when he should come to set up his kingdom on earth, he would cast out those out of his house, who, instead of being faithful ministers, officiated there only for worldly gain. Not that I determine, that all ministers who are suspicious of this work, do so; but I mention these things to shew why it is to be expected, that a time of a glorious out-pouring of the spirit of God to revive religion, will be a time of remarkable judgments on those ministers who do not serve the end of their ministry.

The example of the unbelieving lord in *Samaria* should especially be for the warning of ministers and rulers. At the time when God turned an extreme famine into great plenty, by a wonderful work of his, the king appointed this lord to have the charge of the gate of the city; where he saw the common people, in multitudes, entering with great joy and gladness, loaden with provision, to feed and feast their almost famished bodies; but he himself, though he saw it with his eyes, never had one taste of it, but, being weak with famine, sunk down in the crowd, and was trodden to death, as a punishment of God for his not giving credit to that great and wonderful work of God, when sufficiently manifested to him to require his belief.—Ministers are those whom the king of the church has appointed to have the charge of the gate at which his people enter into the kingdom of heaven, there to be entertained and satisfied with an eternal feast, *i. e.* ministers have the charge of the house of God, which is the gate of heaven.

They should especially take heed of a spirit of envy towards other ministers, whom God is pleased to use for carrying on this work more than they; and that they do not from such a spirit, reproach some preachers who have the true spirit, as though they were influenced by a false spirit—or were bereft of reason, were mad, and proud, false pretenders, and deserved to be put in prison or the stocks, as disturbers of the peace—lest they expose themselves to the curse of *Shemaiah* the *Nehelamite*, who envied the prophet *Jeremiah*, and in this manner reviled him,

in his letter to *Zephaniah* the priest, *Jer.* xxix. 26, 27. *The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of* Jehoiada *the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the Lord, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks. Now therefore, why hast thou not reproved* Jeremiah *of* Anathoth, *which maketh himself a prophet* to you? His curse is denounced in the 32d *v. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will punish* Shemaiah *the* Nehelamite, *and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among his people, neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord, because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord.* All superiors or elders should take heed, that at this day they be not like the elder brother, who could not bear that the prodigal should be sumptuously entertained, and would not join in the joy of the feast. He was like *Michal, Saul's* daughter, offended at the music and dancing that he heard; the transports of joy displeased him; it seemed to him to be an unseemly and unseasonable noise; and therefore stood at a distance, sullen, and much offended, and full of invectives against the young prodigal.

It is our wisest and best way, fully, and without reluctance, to bow to the great God in this work, and to be entirely resigned to him, with respect to the manner in which he carries it on, and the instruments he is pleased to use. Let us not shew ourselves out of humour, and sullenly refuse to acknowledge the work in its full glory, because we have not had so great a hand in promoting it, or have not shared so largely in its blessings, as some others. Let us not refuse to give all that honour which belongs to others as instruments, because they are young, or are upon other accounts much inferior to ourselves and others; and may appear to us very unworthy that God should put so much honour upon them. When God comes to accomplish any great work for his church, and for the advancement of the kingdom of his son, he always fulfils that scripture, *Isa.* ii. 17. *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.* If God has a design of carrying on this work, every one, whether he be great or small, must either bow to it, or be broken before it. It may be expected that God's hand will be upon every thing that is high, and stiff, and strong in opposition; as in *Isa,* ii. 12, 13, 14, 15. *For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of* Lebanon, *that are high and lifted up, and upon all the*

oaks of Bashan, *and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall.*

Not only magistrates and ministers, but *every living soul*, is now obliged to arise and acknowledge God in this work, and put to his hand to promote it, as they would not expose themselves to God's curse. All sorts of persons throughout the whole congregation of *Israel*, great and small, rich and poor, men and women, helped to build the tabernacle in the wilderness; some in one way, others in another; each one according to his capacity: every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing; all sorts contributed and all sorts were employed in that affair, in labours of their hands, both men and women. Some brought gold and silver, others blue, purple and scarlet, and fine linen; others offered an offering of brass; others, with whom was found shittim-wood, brought it an offering to the Lord: the rulers brought onyx-stones, and spice, and oil; and some brought goat's hair, some rams' skins, and others badgers'-skins. (See *Exod* xxxv. 20, *&c.*) And we are told, *v.* 29. *The children of* Israel *brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing.* And thus it ought to be in this day of building the tabernacle of God; with such a willing and cheerful heart ought every man, woman and child, to do something to promote this work: those who have not onyx-stones, or are not able to bring gold or silver, yet may bring goat's hair.

As all sorts of persons were employed in building the tabernacle in the wilderness, so the whole congregation of *Israel* were called together to set up the tabernacle in *Shiloh*, after they came into *Canaan*, *Josh.* xviii. 1. and the whole congregation of *Israel* were gathered together, to bring up the ark of God from *Kirjath-jearim*. Again, they were all assembled to bring it up out of the house of *Obed-Edom* into *Mount Zion*; so again, all *Israel* met together to assist in the great affair of the dedication of the temple, and bring the ark into it. So we have an account, how that all sorts assisted in the rebuilding the wall of *Jerusalem*, not only the proper inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, but those that dwelt in other parts of the land; not only the priests and rulers, but the *Nethinims* and merchants, husbandmen and mechanicks, and even women, *Neh.* iii. 5, 12, 26, 31, 32. And we have an account of one and another, that he repaired over against his house, *v.* 10, 23, 28. and one that repaired over against his chamber, *v.* 30. So now, at this time of

the rebuilding the wall of *Jerusalem*, every one ought to promote the work of God within his own sphere, and by doing what belongs to him, in the place in which God has set him. Men in a private capacity may repair over against their houses; and even those that have not the government of families, and have but a part of a house belonging to them, should repair each one over against his chamber. Every one should be engaged to do the utmost that lies in his power, labouring with watchfulness, care and diligence, with united hearts, and united strength, and the greatest readiness to assist one another in this work; as God's people rebuilt the wall of *Jerusalem*, who were so diligent in the work, that they wrought from break of day till the stars appeared, and did not so much as put off their clothes in the night. They wrought with great care and watchfulness; with one hand they laboured in the work, and with the other they held a weapon, besides the guard they set to defend them. They were so well united in it, that they appointed one to stand ready with a trumpet in his hand, that, if any were assaulted in one part, those in the other parts, at the sound of the trumpet, might resort to them, and help them. *Neh.* iv.

Great care should be taken that the *press* should be improved to no purpose contrary to the interest of this work. We read, that when God fought against *Sisera*, for the deliverance of his oppressed church, *they that handle the pen of the writer* came to the help of the Lord in that affair, *Judges* v. 14. Whatever sort of men in *Israel* were intended, yet, as the words were indicted by a spirit that had a perfect view of all events to the end of the world, and had a special eye in this song, to that great event of the deliverance of God's church in the latter days, of which this deliverance of *Israel* was a type, it is not unlikely that they have respect to *authors*, who should fight against the kingdom of *Satan* with their pens. Those therefore that publish pamphlets to the disadvantage of this work, and tend either directly or indirectly to bring it under suspicion, and to discourage or hinder it, would do well thoroughly to consider whether this be not indeed the work of God; and whether, if it be, it is not likely that God will go forth as fire, to consume all that stand in his way; and whether there be not danger that the fire kindled in them will scorch the authors.

When a people oppose Christ in the work of his Holy Spirit, it is because it touches them in something that is dear to their carnal minds, and because they see the tendency of it is to cross their pride, and deprive them of the objects of their

lusts. We should take heed that at this day we be not like the *Gadarenes*, who—when Christ came into their country in the exercise of his glorious power and Grace, triumphing over a a legion of devils, and delivering a miserable creature that had long been their captive—were all alarmed, because they lost their swine by it; and a whole multitude of the country came, and besought him to depart out of their coasts. They loved their filthy swine better than Jesus Christ; and had rather have a legion of devils in their country with their herd of swine, than Jesus Christ without them.

This work may be opposed in other ways, besides by directly speaking against the whole of it. Persons may say that they believe there is a good work carried on in the country; and may sometime bless God, in their public prayers, in general terms, for any awakenings or revivals of religion there have lately been in any part of the land; and may pray that God would carry on his own work, and pour out his spirit more and more; and yet, as I apprehend, be in the sight of God's great opposers of his work. Some will express themselves after this manner, who are so far from acknowledging and rejoicing in the infinite mercy and glorious grace of God in causing so happy a change, that they look on the religious state of the country, take it on the whole, much more sorrowful than it was ten years ago; and whose conversation, to those who are well acquainted with them, evidently shews, that they are more out of humour with the state of things, and enjoy themselves less, than they did before ever this work began. If it be manifestly thus with us, and our talk and behaviour with respect to this work be such as has though but an indirect tendency to beget ill thoughts and suspicions in others concerning it, we are opposers of the work of God.

Instead of coming to the help of the Lord, we shall actually fight against him, if we are abundant in insisting on and setting forth the blemishes of the work; so as to manifest that we rather choose and are more forward to take notice of what is amiss, than what is good and glorious in the work. Not but that the errors committed ought to be observed and lamented, and a proper testimony borne against them, and the most probable means should be used to have them amended; but insisting much upon them, as though it were a pleasing theme, or speaking of them with more appearance of heat of spirit, or with ridicule, or an air of contempt, than grief for them, has no tendency to correct the errors; but has a tendency to darken

the glory of God's power and grace appearing in the substance of the work, and to beget jealousies and ill thoughts in the minds of others concerning the whole of it. Whatever errors many zealous persons have ran into, yet if the work, in the substance of it, be the work of God, then it is a joyful day indeed; it is so in heaven, and ought to be so among God's people on earth, especially in that part of the earth where this glorious work is carried on. It is a day of great rejoicing with Christ himself, the good shepherd, when he finds his sheep that was lost, lays it on his shoulders rejoicing, and calls together his friends and neighbours, saying *rejoice with me.* If we therefore are Christ's friends, now it should be a day of great rejoicing with us. If we viewed things in a just light, so great an event as the conversion of such a multitude of sinners, would draw and engage our attention much more than all the imprudences and irregularities that have been; our hearts would be swallowed up with the glory of this event, and we should have no great disposition to attend to any thing else. The imprudences and errors of poor feeble worms do not prevent great rejoicing, in the presence of the angels of God, over so many poor sinners that have repented; and it will be an argument of something very ill in us, if they prevent our rejoicing.

Who loves, in a day of great joy and gladness, to be much insisting on those things that are uncomfortable? Would it not be very improper, on a King's coronation-day, to be much in taking notice of the blemishes of the Royal Family? Or would it be agreeable to the bridegroom, on the day of his espousals, the day of the gladness of his heart, to be much insisting on the blemishes of his bride? We have an account, how at the time of that joyful dispensation of Providence, the restoration of the church of *Israel* after the *Babylonish* captivity, and at the time of the feast of tabernacles, many wept at the faults which were found amongst the people, but were reproved for taking so much notice of the blemishes of that affair, as to overlook the cause of rejoicing. Neh. viii. 9, 10, 11, 12. *And* Nehemiah *which is the* Tirshatha, *and* Ezra *the Priest the Scribe, and the* Levites *that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God, mourn not nor weep: for all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto the Lord; neither be you*

sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites *stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy, neither be you grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.*

God doubtless now expects, that all sorts of persons in *New-England*, rulers, ministers and people, high and low, rich and poor, old and young, should take great notice of his hand in this mighty work of his grace, and should appear to acknowledge his glory in it, and greatly to rejoice in it, every one doing his utmost, in the place where God has set them in, to promote it. And God, according to his wonderful patience, seems to be still waiting to give us opportunity thus to acknowledge and honour him. But, if we finally refuse, there is not the least reason to expect any other than that his awful curse will pursue us, and that the pourings out of his wrath will be proportionable to the despised outpourings of his spirit and grace.

PART III.

SHEWING, IN MANY INSTANCES, WHEREIN THE SUBJECTS, OR ZEALOUS PROMOTERS OF THIS WORK, HAVE BEEN INJURIOUSLY BLAMED.

THIS work, which has lately been carried on in the land, is the work of God, and not the work of man. Its beginning has not been of man's power or device, and its being carried on depends not on our strength or wisdom; but yet God expects of all, that they should use their utmost endeavours to promote it, and that the hearts of all should be greatly engaged in this affair. We should improve our utmost strength in it, however vain human strength is without the power of God; and so he no less requires that we should improve our utmost care, wisdom and prudence, though human wisdom, of itself, be as vain as human strength. Though God is wont to carry on such a work, in such a manner as many ways to shew the weakness

and vanity of means and human endeavours in themselves; yet, at the same time, he carries it on in such a manner as to encourage diligence and vigilance in the use of proper means and endeavours, and to punish the neglect of them. Therefore, in our endeavours to promote this great work, we ought to use the utmost caution, vigilance and skill, in the measures we take in order to it. A great affair should be managed with great prudence. This is the most important affair that ever *New-England* was called to be concerned in. When a people are engaged in war with a powerful and crafty nation, it concerns them to manage an affair of such consequence with the utmost discretion. Of what vast importance then must it be, that we should be vigilant and prudent in the management of this great war with so great a host of subtile and cruel enemies. We must either conquer or be conquered; and the consequence of the victory, on one side, will be our eternal destruction in both soul and body in hell, and, on the other side, our obtaining the kingdom of heaven, and reigning in it in eternal glory! We had need always to stand on our watch, and to be well versed in the art of war, and not be ignorant of the devices of our enemies, and to take heed lest by any means we be beguiled through their subtility.

Though the devil be strong, yet, in such a war as this, he depends more on his craft than his strength. The course he has chiefly taken, from time to time, to clog, hinder and overthrow revivals of religion in the church of God, has been by his subtile, deceitful management, to beguile and mislead those that have been engaged therein; and in such a course God has been pleased, in his holy and sovercign Providence, to suffer him to succeed, oftentimes, in a great measure, to overthrow that which in its beginning appeared most hopeful and glorious. The work now begun, as I have shown is eminently glorious, and, if it should go on and prevail, it would make *New-England* a kind of heaven upon earth. Is it not therefore a thousand pities that it should be overthrown, through wrong and improper management, which we are led into by our subtile adversary, in our endeavours to promote it?—My present design is to take notice of some things at which offence has been taken beyond just bounds.

I. One thing that has been complained of is Ministers addressing themselves rather to the *affections* of their hearers than

to their understandings, and striving to raise their passions to the utmost height, rather by a very affectionate manner of speaking, and a great appearance of earnestness in voice and gesture, than by clear reasoning, and informing their judgment: By which means it is objected that the affections are moved, without a proportionable inlightning of the understanding.

To which I would say, I am far from thinking that it is not very profitable for Ministers, in their preaching, to endeavour clearly and distinctly to explain the doctrines of religion, and unravel the difficulties that attend them, and to confirm them with strength of reason and argumentation, and also to observe some easy and clear method in their discourses, for the help of the understanding and memory; and it is very probable that these things have been of late too much neglected by many Ministers. Yet I believe that the objection made, of affections raised without inlightning the understanding, is in a great measure built on a mistake, and confused notions that some have about the nature and cause of the affections, and the manner in which they depend on the understanding. All affections are raised either by light *in the understanding*, or by some error and delusion *in the understanding:* For all affections do certainly arise from some apprehension in the understanding; and that apprehension must either be agreeable to truth, or else be some mistake or delusion; if it be an apprehension or notion that is agreeable to truth, then it is *light in the understanding.* Therefore the thing to be enquired into is, whether the apprehensions or notions of divine and eternal things, that are raised in people's minds by these affectionate preachers, whence their affections are excited, be apprehensions agreeable to truth, or whether they are mistakes. If the former, then the affections are raised the way they should be, *viz.* by informing the mind, or conveying light to the understanding. They go away with a wrong notion, who think that those preachers cannot affect their hearers by inlightning their understandings, except by such a distinct and learned handling of the doctrinal points of religion, as depends on human discipline, or the strength of natural reason, and tends to inlarge their hearers learning, and speculative knowledge in divinity. The manner of preaching without this, may be such as shall tend very much to set divine and eternal things in a right view, and to give the hearers such ideas and apprehensions of them as are agreeable to truth, and such impressions on their

hearts as are answerable to the real nature of things. And beside the words that are spoken, the manner of speaking has a great tendency to this. I think an exceeding affectionate way of preaching about the great things of religion, has in itself no tendency to beget false apprehensions of them; but on the contrary a much greater tendency to beget true apprehensions of them, than a moderate, dull, indifferent way of speaking of them. An appearance of affection and earnestness in the manner of delivery, though very great indeed, if it be agreeable to the nature of the subject—and be not beyond a proportion to its importance, and worthiness of affection, and if there be no appearance of its being feigned or forced—has so much the greater tendency to beget true ideas or apprehensions in the minds of the hearers concerning the subject spoken of, and so to inlighten the understanding: and that for this reason, That such a way or manner of speaking of these things does, in fact, more truly represent them, than a more cold and indifferent way of speaking of them. If the subject be in its own nature worthy of very great affection, then speaking of it with very great affection is most agreeable to the nature of that subject, or is the truest representation of it, and therefore has most of a tendency to beget true ideas of it in the minds of those to whom the representation is made. And I do not think Ministers are to be blamed for raising the affections of their hearers too high, if that which they are affected with be only that which is worthy of affection, and their affections are not raised beyond a proportion to their importance, or worthiness of affection. I should think myself in the way of my duty, to raise the affections of my hearers as high as possibly I can, provided that they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of the subject. I know it has long been fashionable to despise a very earnest and pathetical way of preaching; and they only have been valued as preachers, who have shown the greatest extent of learning, strength of reason, and correctness of method and language. But I humbly conceive it has been for want of understanding or duly considering human nature, that such preaching has been thought to have the greatest tendency to answer the ends of preaching; and the experience of the present and past ages abundantly confirms the same. Though as I said before, clearness of distinction and illustration, and strength of reason, and a good method, in the doctrinal handling of the truths of religion, is many ways needful and profitable, and not to be neglected; yet an increase in speculative

knowledge in divinity is not what is so much needed by our people as something else. Men may abound in this sort of light, and have no heat. How much has there been of this sort of knowledge, in the Christian world, in this age? Was there ever an age, wherein strength and penetration of reason, extent of learning, exactness of distinction, correctness of stile, and clearness of expression, did so abound? And yet, was there ever an age, wherein there has been so little sense of the evil of sin, so little love to God, heavenly-mindedness, and holiness of life, among the professors of the true religion? Our people do not so much need to have their heads stored, as to have their hearts touched; and they stand in the greatest need of that sort of preaching, which has the greatest tendency to do this.

Those texts, Isa. lviii. 1. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of* Jacob *their sins.* And, Ezek. vi. 11. *Thus saith the Lord God, Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of* Israel! I say, these texts (however the use that some have made of them has been laughed at) will fully justify a great degree of *pathos*, and manifestation of zeal and fervency in preaching the word of God. They may indeed be abused, so as to countenance that which would be odd and unnatural amongst us, not making due allowance for difference of manners and customs in different ages and nations; but, let us interpret them how we will, they at least imply, that a most affectionate and earnest manner of delivery, in many cases, becomes a preacher of God's word.

Preaching of the word of God is commonly spoken of in scripture, in such expressions as seem to import a loud and earnest speaking; as in Isa. xl. 2. *Speak ye comfortably to* Jerusalem, *and cry unto her, that her iniquity is pardoned.* And v. 3. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord,*——v. 6. *The Voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field.* Jer. ii. 2. *Go and cry in the ears of* Jerusalem, *saying, Thus saith the Lord,* &c. Jonah, i. 2. *Arise, go to* Nineveh, *that great city, and cry against it.* Isa. lxi. 1, 2. *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek—to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.* Isa. lxii. 11. *Be-*

hold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, *Behold, thy salvation cometh,* &c. Rom. x. 18 *Their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Jer. xi. 6. *Proclaim all these words in the cities of* Judah, *and in the streets of* Jerusalem, *saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.* So, Chap. xix. 2. and vii. 2. Prov. viii. 1. *Doth not wisdom cry, and understanding put forth her voice?* v. 3, 4. *She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.* And chap. i. 20. *Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets.* Chap. ix. 3. *She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the high places of the city.* John vii. 37. *In the last day, that great day of the feast,* Jesus *stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*

It seems to be foretold, that the gospel should be especially preached in a loud and earnest manner, at the introduction of the prosperous state of religion in the latter days. Isa. xl. 9. *O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain! O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength! Lift it up, and be not afraid! Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!* Isa. lii. 7, 8. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!—Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice.* Isa. xxvii. 13. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish.* —And this will be one way by which the church of God will cry at that time like a travailing woman, when Christ mystical is going to be brought forth; as Rev. xii. at the beginning. It will be by Ministers, as her mouth, that Christ will then cry like a travailing woman, as in Isa. xlii. 14. *I have long time holden my peace, I have been still and refrained myself: Now will I cry like a travailing woman.* Christ cries by his ministers, and the church cries by her officers. And it is worthy to be noted, that the word commonly used in the New Testament which we translate *preach*, properly signifies to *proclaim aloud like a crier.*

II. Another thing that some ministers have been greatly blamed for, and I think unjustly, is speaking *terror* to them who are already under great terrors, instead of comforting them. Indeed, if ministers in such a case go about to terrify persons with that which is not true, or to affright them by representing their case worse than it is, or in any respect otherwise than it is, they are to be condemned; but if they terrify

them only by still holding forth more light to them, and giving them to understand more of the truth of their case, they are altogether to be justified. When consciences are greatly awakened by the spirit of God, it is by light imparted, enabling men to see their case, in some measure, as it is; and, if more light be let in, it will terrify them still more. But Ministers are not therefore to be blamed, that they endeavour to hold forth more light to the conscience, and do not rather alleviate the pain they are under, by intercepting and obstructing the light that shines already. To say any thing to those who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to represent their case any otherwise than exceeding terrible, is not to preach the word of God to them; for the word of God reveals nothing but truth, but this is to delude them. Why should we be afraid to let persons who are in an infinitely miserable condition, know the truth, or bring them into the light, for fear it should terrify them? It is light that must convert them, if ever they are converted. The more we bring sinners into the light, while they are miserable, and the light is terrible to them, the more likely it is that afterward the light will be joyful to them. The ease, peace and comfort, which natural men enjoy, have their foundation in darkness and blindness; therefore as that darkness vanishes, and light comes in, their peace vanishes, and they are terrified. But that is no good argument why we should endeavour to hold their darkness, that we may uphold their comfort. The truth is, that as long as men reject Christ, and do not savingly believe in him, however they may be awakened, and however strict, and conscientous, and laborious they may be in religion, they have the wrath of God abiding on them, they are his enemies, and the children of the Devil; (as the scripture calls all who are not savingly converted, *Mat.* xiii. 38. 1. *John* iii. 10.) and it is uncertain whether they shall ever obtain mercy. God is under no obligation to shew them mercy, nor will he, if they fast and pray and cry never so much: and they are then especially provoking God, under those terrors, that they stand it out against Christ, and will not accept of an offered Saviour, though they see so much need of him. And seeing this is the truth, they should be told so, that they may be sensible what their case indeed is.

To blame a Minister for thus declaring the Truth to those who are under awakenings, and not immediately administring comfort to them, is like blaming a Surgeon, because when he has begun to thrust in his lance, whereby he has already put his Patient to great pain, and he shrinks and cries out with

anguish, he is so cruel that he will not stay his hand, but goes on to thrust it in further, till he comes to the core of the wound. Such a compassionate Physician, who as soon as his Patient began to flinch, should withdraw his hand, and go about immediately to apply a plaister, to skin over the wound, and leave the core untouched, would heal the hurt slightly, crying, *Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace.*

Indeed something besides terror is to be preached to them whose consciences are awakened. They are to be told that there is a Saviour provided, who is excellent and glorious; who has shed his precious blood for sinners, and is every way sufficient to save them; who stands ready to receive them, if they will heartily embrace him; for this is also the truth, as well as that they now are in an infinitely dreadful condition. This is the word of God. Sinners, at the same time that they are told how miserable their case is, should be earnestly invited to come and accept of a Saviour, and yield their hearts unto him, with all the winning, encouraging arguments, that the gospel affords. But this is to induce them to escape from the misery of their condition, not to make them think their present condition to be less miserable than it is, or to abate their uneasiness and distress, while they are in it. That would be the way to quiet them, and fasten them there, and not to excite them to flee from it. Comfort in one sense, is to be held forth to sinners under awakenings of conscience, *i. e.* comfort is to be offered to them in Christ, on their fleeing *from their present miserable state* to him. But comfort is not to be administered to them, *in their present state*, or while out of Christ. No comfort is to be administered to them, from any thing in *them*, any of their qualifications, prayers or other performances, past, present or future; but Ministers should, in such cases, strive to their utmost to take all such comforts from them, though it greatly increases their terror. A person who sees himself ready to sink into hell, is prone to strive, some way or other, to lay God under some obligation to him; but he is to be beat off from every thing of that nature, though it greatly increases his terror, to see himself wholly destitute of any Refuge, or any thing of his own to lay hold of; as a man that sees himself in danger of drowning, is in terror, and endeavours to catch hold on every twig within his reach, and he that pulls away those twigs from him increases his terror; yet if they are insufficient to save him, and by being in his way prevents his looking to that which will save him, to pull away them is necessary to save his life.

If sinners are in distress from any error they embrace, or

mistake they are under, that is to be removed. For instance, if they are in terror, from an apprehension that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or that those things have happened to them which are certain signs of reprobation, or any other delusion, such terrors have no tendency to do them any good; for these terrors are from temptation, and not from conviction. But that terror which arises from conviction, or a sight of truth, is to be increased; for those who are most awakened, have great remaining stupidity. It is from remaining blindness and darkness that they see no more, and that remaining blindness is a disease which we should endeavour to remove. I am not afraid to tell sinners who are most sensible of their misery, that their case is indeed as miserable as they think it to be, and a thousand times more so; for this is the truth. Some may be ready to say, That though it be the truth, yet the truth is not to be spoken at all times, and seems not to be seasonable then. But it seems to me, such truth is never more seasonable than at such a time, when Christ is beginning to open the eyes of conscience. Ministers ought to act as coworkers with him; to take that opportunity, and to the utmost to improve that advantage, and strike while the iron is hot. When the light has begun to shine, then they should remove all obstacles, and use all proper means, that it may come in more fully. And experience abundantly shews, that to take this course is not of a hurtful tendency, but very much the contrary. I have seen, in very many instances, the happy effects of it, and oftentimes a very speedy happy issue; and never knew any ill consequence, in case of real conviction, and when distress has been only from thence.

I know of but one case, wherein the truth ought to be withheld from sinners in distress of conscience, and that is the case of melancholy: And it is not to be withheld from them, as if the truth tends to do them hurt; but because, if we speak the truth to them, sometimes they will be deceived, and led into error by it, through that strange disposition there is in them to take things wrong. So that, though what is spoken is truth, yet as it is heard, received, and applied by them, it is falshood; as it will be, unless the truth be spoken with abundance of caution and prudence, and consideration of their disposition and circumstances. But the most awful truths of God's word ought not to be withheld from public congregations, because it may happen that some such melancholic persons may be in it: any more than the bible is to be withheld from the christian world, because it is manifest that there are a great many melancholic

persons in Christendom that exceedingly abuse the awful things contained in the scripture, to their own wounding. Nor do I think that to be of weight, which is made use of by some, as a great and dreadful objection against the terrifying preaching that has of late been in *New-England*, *viz.* That there have been some instances of melancholic persons who have so abused it, that the issue has been the murder of themselves. The objection from hence is no stronger against awakning preaching, than it is against the bible itself. There are hundreds, and probably thousands of instances, of persons who have murdered themselves under religious melancholy. These murders probably never would have been, if the world had remained in a state of heathenish darkness. The Bible has not only been the occasion of these sad effects, but of thousands, and I suppose millions, of other cruel murders committed in the persecutions that have been raised, which never would have been if it had not been for the bible. Many whole countries have been as it were deluged with innocent blood, which would not have been if the Gospel never had been preached in the world. It is not a good objection against any kind of preaching, that some men abuse it greatly to their hurt. It has been acknowledged by all Divines, as a thing common in all ages, and all christian countries, that a very great part of those who sit under the gospel abuse it. It proves an occasion of their far more aggravated damnation, and so of eternally murdering their souls; which is an effect infinitely more terrible than the murder of their bodies. It is as unjust to lay the blame of these self-murders to those Ministers who have declared the awful truths of God's word in the most lively and affecting manner, as it would be to lay the blame of hardening men's hearts, and blinding their eyes, and their more dreadful eternal damnation, to the Prophet *Isaiah* or Jesus Christ, because this was the consequence of their preaching with respect to many of their hearers; *Isa.* vi. 10. *John* ix. 39. *Mat.* xiii. 14. Though a few have abused the awakening preaching to their own temporal death; yet it may be to one such instance, there have been hundreds, yea thousands, who have been saved, by this means, from eternal death.

What has more especially given offence to many, and raised a loud cry against some preachers, as though their conduct were intolerable, is their frighting poor innocent children with talk of hell-fire, and eternal damnation. But if those who complain so loudly of this, really believe what is the general profession of the country, *viz.* That all are by nature the children of wrath, and heirs of hell—and that every one that has not

been born again, whether he be young or old, is exposed every moment to eternal destruction—then such a complaint and cry as this bewrays a great deal of weakness and inconsideration. Innocent as children seem to us, yet, if they are out of Christ, they are not so in the sight of God; but are in a most miserable condition, as well as grown persons: and they are naturally very senseless and stupid, being *born as the wild Ass's Colt*, and need much to awaken them. Why should we conceal the truth from them? Will those children who have been dealt tenderly with in this respect, and lived and died insensible of their misery till they come to feel it in Hell, ever thank parents and others for their tenderness, in not letting them know their danger? If parent's love towards their children were not blind, it would affect them much more to see their children every day exposed to eternal burnings, and yet senseless, than to see them suffer the distress of that awakening which is necessary in order to their escape, and that tends to their being eternally happy as the children of God. A child that has a dangerous wound may need the painful lance, as well as grown persons; and that would be a foolish pity, in such a case, that should hold back the lance, and throw away the life.——I have seen the happy effects of dealing plainly and thoroughly with children in the concerns of their souls, without sparing them at all, in many instances; and never knew any ill consequence of it, in any one instance.

III. Another thing, against which a great deal has been said, is having so frequent *religious meetings*, and spending so much time in religion. Indeed, there are none of the externals of religion but what are capable of excess; and I believe it is true, that there has not been a due proportion observed of late. We have placed religion too much in the external duties of the first table; we have abounded in religious meetings, in praying, reading, hearing, singing, and religious conference; and there has not been a proportionable increase of zeal for deeds of charity, and other duties of the second table; though it must be acknowledged that they are also much increased. But yet it appears to me, that this objection has been in the general groundless. Though worldly business must be done, and persons ought not to neglect that of their particular callings; yet it is to the honour of God, that a people should be so much in outward acts of religion, as to carry in it a visible, public appearance of a great engagedness of mind, especially at such an extraordinary time. When God appears unusually present

with a people in wonderful works of power and mercy, they should spend more time than usual in religious exercises, to put honour upon that God who is then extraordinarily present, and to seek his face. Thus it was with the christian church in *Jerusalem*, on occasion of that extraordinary pouring out of the spirit, soon after Christ's ascension, *Acts* ii. 46. *And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house;* And at *Ephesus*, where the christians attended public religious exercises, every day, for two years together, *Acts*, xix. 8, 9, 10. *And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one* Tyrannus. *And this continued, by the space of two years; so that all they that dwelt in* Asia, *heard the word of the Lord, both* Jews *and* Greeks. And as to the grand objection of, *six days shalt thou labour;* all that can be understood by it, and all that the very objectors themselves understand by it, is, that we *may* follow our secular labours in those six days that are not the Sabbath, and *ought* to be diligent in them: not but that sometimes we may turn from them, even within those six days, to keep a day of fasting or thanksgiving, or to attend a lecture; and that more frequently or rarely, as God's Providence and the state of things shall call us, according to the best of our discretion.

Though secular business, as I said before, ought not to be neglected; yet I cannot see how it can be maintained, that religion ought not to be attended, lest it should injure our temporal affairs, on any other principle than that of infidelity.—None object against injuring one temporal affair for the sake of another of much greater importance: And therefore, if eternal things are as real as temporal things, and are indeed of infinitely greater importance; then why may we not voluntarily suffer, in some measure, in our temporal concerns, while we are seeking eternal riches, and immortal glory? It is looked upon as no way improper for a whole nation to spend a considerable time, and much of their outward substance, on some extraordinary temporal occasion, for the sake only of the ceremonies of a public rejoicing; and it would be thought dishonourable to be very exact about what we spend, or careful lest we injure our estates, on such an occasion. And why should we be exact only with Almighty God, so that it should

be a crime to be otherwise than scrupulously careful lest we injure ourselves in our temporal interest, to put honour upon him, and seek our own eternal happiness? We should take heed that none of us be in any wise like *Judas*; who greatly complained of needless expence, and waste of outward substance, to put honour upon Christ, when *Mary* broke her box, and poured the precious ointment on his head. He *had indignation* within himself on that account, and cries out, *Why was this waste of ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor*, Mark xiv. 3, &c. and John xii. 4, &c.

Besides, if the matter be justly examined, I believe it will be found, that the country has lost no time from their temporal affairs by the late revival of religion, but have rather gained; and that more time has been saved from frolicking and tavern-haunting, idleness and unprofitable visits; vain talk, fruitless pastimes, and needless diversions, than has lately been spent in extraordinary religion; and probably five times as much has been saved in various ways, as has been spent by religious meetings. The great complaint made against so much time being spent in religion, cannot be in general from a real concern that God may be honoured, and his will done, and the best good of men promoted; as is very manifest from this, that now there is a much more earnest and zealous outcry made in the country against this extraordinary religion, than was before against so much time spent in tavern-haunting, vain company-keeping, night-walking, and other things, which wasted both our time and substance, and injured our moral virtue.

The frequent preaching that has lately obtained, has in a particular manner been objected against as unprofitable and prejudicial. It is objected, that, when sermons are heard so very often, one sermon tends to thrust out another; so that persons lose the benefit of all. They say, two or three sermons in a week is as much as they can remember and digest.—Such objections against frequent preaching, if they be not from an enmity against religion, are for want of duly considering the way that sermons usually profit an auditory. The main benefit obtained by preaching is by impression made upon the mind at the time, and not by an effect that arises afterwards by a remembrance of what was delivered. And though an after-remembrance of what was heard in a sermon is oftentimes very profitable; yet, for the most part, that remembrance is from an impression the words made on the heart at the time;

and the memory profits, as it renews and increases that impression. A frequent inculcating the more important things of religion in preaching, has no tendency to rase out such impressions, but to increase them, and fix them deeper and deeper in the mind, as is found by experience. It never used to be objected against, that persons upon the Sabbath, after they have heard two sermons that day, should go home, and spend the remaining part of the Sabbath in reading the scriptures, and printed sermons; which, in proportion as it has a tendency to affect the mind at all, tends as much to drive out what they have heard, as if they heard another sermon preached. It seems to have been the practice of the Apostles to preach every day, in places where they went; yea, though sometimes they continued long in one place, Acts ii. 42, 46. Acts xix. 8, 9, 10. They did not avoid preaching one day, for fear they should thrust out of the minds of their hearers what they had delivered the day before; nor did Christians avoid going every day to hear, for fear of any such bad effect; Acts ii. 42, 46.

There are some things in scripture that seem to signify that there should be preaching in an extraordinary frequency, at the time when God should introduce the flourishing state of religion in the latter days; as Isa. lxii. *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory.* And, v. 5, 6. *For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: And as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night.* The destruction of the city of *Jericho* is evidently, in all its circumstances, intended by God as a great type of the overthrow of Satan's kingdom. The priests blowing with trumpets, represents Ministers preaching the gospel. The people compassed the city seven days, the Priests blowing the trumpets. But, when the day was come that the walls of the city were to fall, the Priests were more frequent and abundant in blowing their trumpets; there was as much done in one day then, as had been done in seven days before; they compassed the city seven times that day, blowing their trumpets, till at length it come to one long and perpetual blast, and then the walls of the city fell down flat. The extraordinary preaching that shall be at the beginning of that glorious jubilee of the church,

is represented by the extraordinary sounding of trumpets, throughout the land of *Canaan*, at the beginning of the year of jubilee. And the reading of the law before all *Israel*, in the year of release, at the feast of tabernacles; and the crowing of the cock at break of day, which brought Peter to repentance; seems to me to be intended to signify the awakening of God's church out of their lethargy, wherein they had denied their Lord, by the extraordinary preaching of the gospel that shall be at the dawning of the day of the church's light and glory. And there seems at this day to be an uncommon hand of Divine Providence, in animating, enabling and upholding some Ministers in such abundant labours.

IV. Another thing, wherein I think some Ministers have been injured, is in being very much blamed for making so much of outcries, faintings, and other bodily effects; speaking of them as tokens of the presence of God, and arguments of the success of preaching; seeming to strive to their utmost to bring a congregation to that pass, and seeming to rejoice in it, yea, even blessing God for it when they see these effects.

Concerning this I would observe, in the *first* place, That there are many things, with respect to cryings out, falling down, &c. charged on Ministers, that they are not guilty of. Some would have it, that they speak of these things as certain evidences of a work of the Spirit of God on the hearts of their hearers; or that they esteem these bodily effects themselves to be the work of God, as though the Spirit of God took hold of and agitated the bodies of men; and some are charged with making these things essential, and supposing that persons cannot be converted without them; whereas I never yet could see the person that held either of these things.

But for speaking of such effects as probable tokens of God's presence, and arguments of the success of preaching, it seems to me they are not to be blamed; because I think they are so indeed. And therefore when I see them excited by preaching the important truths of God's word, urged and inforced by proper arguments and motives, or as consequent on other means that are good, I do not scruple to speak of them, and to rejoice in them, and bless God for them as such; and for this reason, viz. That from time to time, upon proper enquiry and examination, and observation of the consequences and fruits, I have found that these are all evidences of the persons in whom these effects appear, being under the influences of God's Spirit, in such cases. Crying out, in such a

manner, and with such circumstances, as I have seen them from time to time, is as much an evidence to me, of the general cause it proceeds from, as language. I have learned the meaning of it the same way that persons learn the meaning of language, viz. by use and experience. I confess that when I see a great crying out in a congregation, in the manner that I have seen it, when those things are held forth to them which are worthy of their being greatly affected by them, I rejoice in it, much more than merely in an appearance of solemn attention, and a shew of affection by weeping; and that because when there have been those outcries, I have found from time to time a much greater and more excellent effect. To rejoice that the work of God is carried on calmly, without much ado, is in effect to rejoice that it is carried on with less power, or that there is not so much of the influence of God's Spirit.—For though the degree of the influence of the Spirit of God, on *particular persons*, is by no means to be judged of by the degree of external appearances, because of the different constitution, tempers and circumstances of men; yet, if there be a very powerful influence of the Spirit of God on a mixed multitude, it will cause some way or other a great visible commotion.

And as to Ministers aiming at such effects, and striving by all means to bring a congregation to that pass, that there should be such an uproar among them; I suppose none aim at it any otherwise, than as they strive to raise the affections of their hearers to such a height as very often appears in these effects. And if those affections are commonly good, and it be found by experience that such a degree of them commonly has a good effect, I think they are to be justified in so doing.

V. Again, some Ministers have been blamed for keeping persons together, that have been under great affections, which have appeared in such extraordinary outward manifestations.—Many think this promotes confusion that persons in such circumstances do but discompose each others minds, and disturb the minds of others; and that therefore it is best they should be dispersed; and that when any in a congregation are strongly seized, that they cannot forbear outward manifestations of it, they should be removed, that others minds may not be diverted.

I cannot but think that those who thus object go upon quite wrong notions of things. For though persons ought to take heed that they do not make an ado without necessity; for

this will be the way in time to have such appearances lose all their effect; yet the unavoidable manifestations of strong religious affections tend to a happy influence on the minds of bystanders, and are found by experience to have an excellent and durable effect. And so to contrive and order things, that others may have opportunity and advantage to observe them, has been found to be blessed, as a great means to promote the work of God; and to prevent their being in the way of observation, is to prevent the effect of that which God makes use of as a principal means of carrying on his work at such an extraordinary time, viz. example; which is often spoken of in scripture, as one of the chief means by which God would carry on his work in the prosperity of religion in the latter days.—I have mentioned some texts already to this purpose, in what I published before, of *the marks of a work of the true spirit;* but would here mention some others. In Zech. ix. 15, 16. those that in the latter days should be filled in an extraordinary manner with the Holy Spirit, so as to appear in outward manifestations, and making a noise, are spoken of as those that God, in these uncommon circumstances, will set up to the view of others, as a prize or ensign, by their example and the excellency of their attainments, to animate and draw others, as men gather about an ensign, and run for a prize, a crown and precious jewels, set up in their view. The words are; *And they shall drink and make a noise as through wine, and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.* (I shall have occasion to say something more of this scripture afterwards.) Those that make the objection I am upon, instead of suffering this ensign to be in public view, are for having it removed, and hid in some corner. To the like purpose is that, Isa. lxii. 3. *Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.* Here it is observable, that it is not said, thou shalt be a crown *upon the head*, but *in the hand* of the Lord; *i. e.* held forth, in thy beauty and excellency, as a prize, to be bestowed upon others that shall behold thee, and be animated by the brightness and lustre which God shall endow thee with. The great influence of the example of God's people, in their bright and excellent attainments, to propagate religion in those days, is further signified in Isa. lx. 3. *And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and Kings to the brightness of thy rising.* With v. 22. *A little one shall be-*

come a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. And Zech. x. 8, 9. *And they shall increase, as they have increased; and I will sow them among the people.* And Hos. ii. 23. *And I will sow her unto me in the earth.* So Jer. xxxi. 27.

VI. Another thing, that gives great disgust to many is the disposition that persons shew, under great affections, to speak so much; and, with such earnestness and vehemence, to be setting forth the greatness and wonderfulness and importance of divine and eternal things; and to be so passionately warning, inviting and intreating others.

Concerning which I would say, That I am far from thinking that such a disposition should be wholly without any limits or regulation (as I shall more particularly shew afterwards;) and I believe some have erred, in setting no bounds, and indulging and encouraging this disposition without any kind of restraint or direction. But yet it seems to me, that such a disposition in general is what both reason and scripture will justify. Those who are offended at such things, as though they were unreasonable, are not just. Upon examination it will probably be found, that they have one rule of reasoning about temporal things, and another about spiritual things. They do not at all wonder, if a person on some very great and affecting occasion, an occasion of extraordinary danger or great joy, that eminently and immediately concerns him and others—is disposed to speak much, and with great earnestness, especially to those with whom he is united in the bonds of dear affection, and great concern for their good. And therefore, if they were just, why would not they allow it in spiritual things? and much *more* in them, agreeably to the vastly greater importance and more affecting nature of spiritual things, and the concern which true religion causes in men's minds for the good of others, and the disposition it gives and excites to speak God's praises, to shew forth his infinite glory, and talk of all his glorious perfections and works?

That a very great and proper sense of the importance of religion, and the danger sinners are in, should sometimes cause an almost insuperable disposition to speak and warn others, is agreeable to Jer. vi. 10, 11. *To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: Behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of the young men together; for even the hus-*

band with the wife shall be taken, the aged, with him that is full of days. And that true christians, when they come to be as it were waked out of sleep, and to be filled with a sweet and joyful sense of the excellent things of religion, by the preaching of the gospel, or by other means of grace, should be disposed to be much in speaking of divine things, though before they were dumb, is agreeable to what Christ says to his church, Cant. vii. 9. *And the roof of thy mouth is like the best wine, for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.* The roof of the church's mouth is the officers in the church, that preach the gospel; their word is to Christ's beloved like the best wine, that goes down sweetly; extraordinarily refreshing and enlivening the saints, causing them to speak, though before they were mute and asleep. It is as said by some, That the subjects of this work, when they get together, talking loud and earnestly in their pretended great joys, several in a room talking at the same time, make a noise just like a company of drunken persons. On which I would observe, that it is foretold that God's people should do so, in that forementioned place, Zech. ix. 15—17. of which I shall now take more particular notice. The words are as follow; *The Lord of hosts shall defend them, and they shall devour and subdue with sling stones, and they shall drink and make a noise as through wine, and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.* The words are very remarkable: Here it is foretold, that at the time when Christ shall set up an universal kingdom upon earth (v. 20.) the children of Zion shall drink, till they are filled like the vessels of the sanctuary. And, if we would know with what they shall be thus filled, the prophecy does in effect explain itself; they shall be filled as the vessels of the sanctuary that contained the drink offering, which was wine. And yet the words imply, that it shall not literally be wine that they shall drink and be filled with, because it is said, They shall drink, and make a noise, *as through wine*, as if they had drank wine; which implies that they had not literally done it. And therefore we must understand the words that they shall drink into that, and be filled with that, which the wine of the drink-offering typically represented, which is

the Holy Spirit, as well as the blood of Christ, that new wine that is drank in our heavenly Father's kingdom. They shall be filled with the Spirit, which the Apostle sets in opposition to a being drunk with wine, Eph. v. 18. This is the new wine spoken of, v. 17. It is the same with that *best wine*, spoken of in *Canticles, that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.* It is here foretold, that the children of Zion, in the latter days, should be filled with that which should make them cheerful, and cause them to make a noise as through wine, and by which these joyful happy persons shall be as the stones of a crown lifted up as an ensign upon God's land, being made joyful in the extraordinary manifestations of the beauty and love of Christ; as it follows, *How great is his goodness! and how great is his beauty!* And it is further remarkable that, as is here foretold, it should be thus especially amongst young people; *Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.* It would be ridiculous to understand this of literal bread and wine. Without doubt, the same spiritual blessings are signified by bread and wine here, which were represented by *Melchizedek's* bread and wine, and are signified by the bread and wine in the Lord's supper One of the marginal readings is, *shall make the young men to speak;* which is agreeable to that in Canticles, of the *best wines causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.*

We ought not to be, in any measure, like the unbelieving *Jews* in Christ's time, who were disgusted both with crying out with distress, and with joy. When the poor blind man cried out before all the multitude, *Jesus, thou son of David have mercy on me!* and continued instantly thus doing, the multitude rebuked him, and charged him that he should hold his tongue, Mark x. 46—48. and Luke xviii. 38, 39. They looked upon it to be a very indecent noise that he made; a thing very ill becoming him, to cause his voice to be heard so much, and so loud, among the multitude. And when Christ made his solemn and triumphant entry into *Jerusalem* (which, I have before observed, was a type of the glory and triumph of the latter days) the whole multitude of the disciples, especially young people, began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, *Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord! peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!* The *Pharisees* said to Christ, *Master, rebuke thy disciples.* They did not understand such great transports of joy; it seemed to them a very unsuitable and indecent noise and clamour that they made, a

confused uproar, many crying out together, as though they were out of their wits; they wondered that Christ would tolerate it. But what says Christ? *I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.* The words seem to intimate, that there was cause enough to constrain those whose hearts were not harder than the very stones, to cry out, and make a noise; which is something like that other expression, of *causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.*

When many, under great religious affections, are earnestly speaking together of divine wonders, in various parts of a company, to those who are next them; some attending to one, and others to another; there is something very beautiful in it, provided they do not speak so as to drown each others voices, that none can hear what any say. There is a greater and more affecting appearance of a joint engagedness of heart, in the love and praises of God; and I had rather see it, than to see one speaking alone, and all attending to what he says; it has more of the appearance of conversation. When a multitude meets on any occasion of temporal rejoicing, freely and cheerfully to converse together, they are not wont to observe the ceremony of but one speaking at a time, while all the rest in a formal manner set themselves to attend to what he says. That would spoil all conversation, and turn it into the formality of set speeches. It is better for lay persons, speaking one to another of the things of God, when they meet together, to speak after the manner of christian conversation, than to observe the formality of but one speaking at a time, the whole multitude silently and solemnly attending to what he says; which would carry in it too much of the air of the authority and solemnity of preaching. The Apostle says, 1 Cor. xiv. 29, 30, 31. *Let the Prophets speak, two or three, and let the others judge: If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace: For ye may all prophesy, one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted;* but this does not reach the present case, because what the Apostle is speaking of is the solemnity of their religious exercises in public worship, and persons speaking in the church by immediate inspiration, and in the use of the gift of prophecy, or some gift of inspiration, in the exercise of which they acted as extraordinary ministers of Christ.

VII. Another thing, that some have found fault with, is abounding so much in singing in religious meetings. Objecting against such a thing as this, seems to arise from a suspicion

already established of this work. They doubt of the pretended extraordinary love and joys that attend this work, and so find fault with the manifestations of them. If they thought persons were truly the subjects of an extraordinary degree of divine love, and heavenly rejoicing in God, I suppose they would not wonder at their having a disposition to be much in praise. They object not against the saints and angels in heaven singing praises and *hallelujahs* to God, without ceasing day or night; and therefore doubtless will allow that the more the saints on earth are like them in their dispositions, the more they will be disposed to do like them. They will readily own that the generality of Christians have great reason to be ashamed that they have so little thankfulness, and are no more in praising God, whom they have such infinite cause to praise. And why therefore should Christians be found fault with, for shewing a disposition to be much in praising God, and manifesting a delight in that heavenly exercise? To complain of this, is to be too much like the *Pharisees*, who were disgusted when the multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and with loud voices to praise God, and cry, *Hosanna*, when Christ was entering into *Jerusalem*.

There are many things in scripture, that seem to intimate that praising God, both in speeches and songs, will be what the church of God will very much abound in, in the approaching glorious day. So on the seventh day of compassing the walls of *Jericho*, when the priests blew with the trumpets in an extraordinary manner, the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall of the city fell down flat. So the Ark was brought back from its banishment, with extraordinary shouting and singing of the whole congregation of *Israel*. And the places in the prophecies of scripture, signifying that the church of God, in the glorious *Jubilee* that is foretold, shall greatly abound in singing and shouting forth the praises of God, are too many to be mentioned. And there will be cause enough for it: I believe it will be a time wherein both heaven and earth will be much more full of joy and praise than ever they were before.

But what is more especially found fault with, in the singing that is now practised, is making use of hymns of human composure. I am far from thinking that the book of Psalms should be thrown by in our public worship, but that it should always be used in the Christian church to the end of the world: But I know of no obligation we are under to *confine* ourselves to it. I can find no command or rule of God's word, that

does any more confine us to the words of the scripture in our singing, than it does in our praying; we speak to God in both. And I can see no reason why we should limit ourselves to such particular forms of words, that we find in the Bible, in speaking to him by way of praise, in metre, and with music, than when we speak to him in prose, by way of prayer and supplication. And it is really *needful* that we should have some other songs besides the Psalms of *David*. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Christian church should for ever, and even in times of her greatest light, in her praises of God and the Lamb, be confined only to the words of the Old Testament, wherein all the greatest and most glorious things of the gospel, that are infinitely the greatest subjects of her praise, are spoken of under a vail, and not so much as the name of our glorious Redeemer ever mentioned, but in some dark figure, or as hid under the name of some type. And as to our making use of the words of others, and not those that are conceived by ourselves, it is no more than we do in all our public prayers; the whole worshipping assembly, excepting one only, makes use of the words that are conceived by him who speaks for the rest.

VIII. Another thing that many have disliked, is the religious meetings of children to read and pray together, and perform religious exercises by themselves. What is objected is children's want of that knowledge and discretion which is requisite in order to a decent and profitable management of religious exercises. But it appears to me the objection is not sufficient. Children, as they have the nature of men, are inclined to society; and those of them who are capable of society one with another, are capable of the influences of the Spirit of God in its active fruits. And if they are inclined by a religious disposition, which they have from the Spirit of God, in order to improve their society one with another, in a religious manner, and to religious purposes, who should forbid them? If they have not discretion to observe method in their religious performances, or to speak sense in all that they say in prayer, they may notwithstanding have a good meaning, and God understands them, and it does not spoil or interrupt their devotion one with another. We who are adults have defects in our prayers, that are a thousand times worse in the sight of God, and are a greater confusion, and more absurd nonsense in his eyes, than their childish indiscretions. There is not so much difference before God, between children and grown persons, as we are ready to imagine; we are all poor, igno-

rant, foolish babes, in his sight. Our adult age does not bring us so much nearer to God as we are apt to think. God in this work has shewn a remarkable regard to little children; never was there such a glorious work amongst persons in their childhood, as has been of late, in *New-England.* He has been pleased in a wonderful manner to perfect praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings; and many of them have more of that knowledge and wisdom that pleases him, and renders their religious worship acceptable, than many of the great and learned men of the world: it is they, in the sight of God, who are the ignorant and foolish children; these are grown men, and an hundred years old, in comparison with them. It is to be hoped that the days are coming, prophesied of, Isa. lxv. 20. when *the child shall die an hundred years old.*

I have seen many happy effects of children's religious meetings; and God has seemed often remarkably to own them in their meetings, and really descended from heaven to be amongst them: I have known several probable instances of children's being converted at such meetings. I should therefore think, that if children appear to be really moved to it by a religious disposition, and not merely from a childish affectation of imitating grown persons, they ought by no means to be discouraged or discountenanced. But yet it is fit that care should be taken of them by their parents and pastors, to instruct and direct them, and to correct imprudent conduct and irregularities if they are perceived, or any thing by which the devil may pervert and destroy the design of their meetings.—All should take heed that they do not find fault with and despise the religion of children, from an evil principle, lest they should be like the chief Priests and Scribes, who were sore displeased at the religious worship and praises of little children, and the honour they gave Christ in the temple. We have an account of it, and of what Christ said upon it, in Matt. xxi. 15, 16. *And when the chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of* David, *they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what those say? And* Jesus *saith unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*

PART IV.

SHEWING WHAT THINGS ARE TO BE CORRECTED OR AVOIDED, IN PROMOTING THIS WORK, OR IN OUR BEHAVIOUR UNDER IT.

HAVING thus observed, in some instances, wherein the conduct of those that have appeared to be the subjects of this work, or have been zealous to promote it, has been objected against or complained of without or beyond just cause; I proceed now, to shew what things ought to be corrected or avoided.

Many, who are zealous for this glorious work of God, are heartily sick of the great noise there is in the country about *imprudences* and *disorders;* they have heard it so often from the mouths of opposers, that they are prejudised against the sound. And they look upon it, that what is called being *prudent* and *regular*, so much insisted on, is no other than being asleep, or cold and dead in religion; and that the great imprudence, so much blamed, is only being alive and engaged in the things of God. They are therefore rather confirmed in any practice, than brought off from it, by the clamour they hear against it, as imprudent and irregular. And, to tell the truth, the cry of irregularity and imprudence has been much more in the mouths of those who have been enemies to the main of the work than others; for they have watched for the halting of the zealous, and eagerly catched at any thing that has been wrong, and have greatly insisted on it, made the most of it, and magnified it; especially have they watched for errors in zealous preachers, who are much in reproving and condemning the wickedness of the times. They would therefore do well to consider that scripture, Isa. xxix. 20, 21. *The scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off, that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.* They have not only too much insisted on and magnified real errors, but have very injuriously charged them as guilty in things wherein they have been innocent, and have done their duty. This has so prejudiced the minds of some, that they have been ready to think that all which has been said about errors and imprudences was injurious and from an ill

spirit. It has confirmed them, that there is no such thing as any prevailing imprudences; and it has made them less cautious and suspicious of themselves, lest they should err.—Herein the devil has had an advantage put into his hands, and has taken it; and, doubtless, has been too subtile for some of the true friends of religion. That would be strange indeed, if in so great a commotion and revolution, and such a new state of things, wherein so many have been engaged, none have been guilty of any imprudence. It would be such a revival of religion as never was, if among so many men, not guided by infallible inspiration, there had not been many notable errors in judgment and conduct; our young preachers, and young converts, must in general vastly exceed *Luther*, the head of the Reformation, who was guilty of a great many excesses in that great affair in which God made him the chief instrument.

If we look back into the history of the church of God in past ages, we may observe that it has been a common device of the devil, to overset a revival of religion; when he finds he can keep men quiet and secure no longer, then he drives them to excesses and extravagances. He holds them back as long as he can; but when he can do it no longer, then he will push them on, and, if possible, run them upon their heads. And it has been by this means chiefly that he has been successful, in several instances, to overthrow most hopeful and promising beginnings. Yea, the principal means by which the devil was successful, by degrees, to overset that grand religious revival of the world, in the primitive ages of christianity, and in a manner to overthrow the christian church through the earth, and to make way for the great Antichristian Apostacy, that masterpiece of all the devil's works, was to improve the indiscreet zeal of christians, to drive them into those three extremes of *enthusiasm*, *superstition*, and *severity towards opposers*; which should be enough for an everlasting warning to the christian church.

Though the devil will do his diligence to stir up the open enemies of religion, yet he knows what is for his interest so well, that, in a time of revival of religion, his main strength shall be tried with the friends of it; and he will chiefly exert himself in his attempts to mislead them. One truly zealous person, in the time of such an event, that seems to have a great hand in the affair, and draws the eyes of many upon him, may do more (through satan's being too subtile for him) to hinder the work, than an hundred great, and strong, and open opposers. In the

time of a great *work* of Christ, his hands, with which he *works*, are often wounded in the house of his friends, and his work hindred chiefly by them: So that if any one enquires, as in *Zech.* xiii. 6. *What are those wounds in thine hands?* he may answer, *Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*

The errors of the friends of the work of God, and especially of the great promoters of it, give vast advantage to the enemies of such a work. Indeed there are many things which are no errors, but are only duties faithfully and thoroughly done that wound the minds of such persons more, than real errors: But yet one real error gives opposers as much advantage, and hinders and clogs the work as much as ten that are only supposed ones. Real errors do not fret and gall the enemies of religion so much as those things that are strictly right; but they encourage them more, they give them liberty, and open a gap for them; so that some who before kept their enmity burning in their own breasts, and durst not show themselves, will on such an occasion take courage, and give themselves vent, and their rage will be like that of an enemy let loose. Those who lay still before, having nothing to say but what they would be ashamed of, (agreeable to *Tit.* ii. 8.) when they have such a weapon put into their hands, will fight with all violence. And indeed the enemies of religion would not know what to do for weapons to fight with, were it not for the errors of its friends; and so must soon fall before them. Besides, in real errors, things that are truly disagreeable to the rule of God's word, we cannot expect the divine protection, and that God will appear on our side, as if our errors were only supposed ones.

Since therefore the errors of the friends and promoters of such a glorious work of God are of such dreadful consequence; and seeing the devil, being sensible of this, is so assiduous, watchful, and subtil in his attempts with them, and has thereby been so successful to overthrow religion heretofore; certainly such persons ought to be exceeding circumspect and vigilant, diffident and jealous of themselves, and humbly dependent on the guidance of the good shepherd. 1 Pet. iv. 7. *Be sober, and watch unto prayer.* And, Chap. v. 8. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about.* For persons to go on resolutely, in a kind of heat and vehemence, despising admonition and correction, being confident that they must be in the right because they are full of the spirit, is directly contrary to the import of these words, be *sober*, be *vigilant*.

It is a mistake I have observed in some, by which they have been greatly exposed to their wounding, that they think they are in no danger of going astray, or being misled by the devil, because they are near to God; and so have no jealous eye upon themselves, and neglect vigilance and circumspection, as needless in their case. They say, they do not think that God will leave them to dishonour him, and wound religion, as long as they keep near to him. And I believe so too, as long as they keep near to God, so as to maintain an universal and diligent watch, and care to do their duty, avoid sin and snares with diffidence in themselves, and humble dependence and prayerfulness. But not merely because they are receiving blessed communications from God, in refreshing views of him; if at the same time they let down their watch, and are not jealous over their own hearts, by reason of its remaining blindness and corruption, and a subtile adversary.—It is a grand error for persons to think they are out of danger from the devil, and a corrupt, deceitful heart, even in their highest flights, and most raised frames of spiritual joy. For persons, in such a confidence, to cease to be jealous of themselves, and to neglect watchfulness and care, is a presumption by which I have known many woefully ensnared. However highly we may be favoured with divine discoveries and comforts, yet, as long as we are in the world, we are in the enemies' country; and therefore that direction of Christ to his disciples is never out of date in this world, Luke xxi. 36. *Watch and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the son of man.* It was not out of date with the disciples to whom it was given, after they came to be full of the Holy Ghost, and *out of their bellies flowed rivers of living water*, by that great effusion upon them that began on the day of *Pentecost*. And though God stands ready to protect his people, especially those that are near to him; yet he expects of all great care and labour, and that we should put on the whole armour of God, that we may stand in the evil day. To whatever spiritual privileges we are raised, we have no warrant to expect protection in any other way; for God has appointed this whole life, to be all as a race or a battle; the state of rest, wherein we shall be so out of danger as to have no need of watching and fighting, is reserved for another world. I have known it in abundance of instances, that the devil has come in very remarkably, even in the midst of the most excellent frames. It may seem a great mystery that it should be so; but it is no greater mystery, than that Christ

should be taken captive by the devil, and carried into the wilderness, immediately after the heavens had been opened to him, and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon him, and when he heard that comfortable, joyful voice from the Father, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* In like manner Christ in the heart of a Christian, is oftentimes as it were taken, and carried captive into a wilderness, presently after heaven has been as it were opened to the soul, and the Holy Ghost has descended upon it like a dove, and when God has been sweetly owning the believer, and testifying his favour to him as his beloved child.

It is therefore a great error and sin in some persons, at this day, that they are fixed in some things which others account errors, and will not hearken to admonition and counsel, but are confident that they are in the right, because God is much with them. There were some such in the Apostles days. The Apostle *Paul*, writing to the *Corinthians*, was sensible that some of them would not be easily convinced that they had been in any error, because they looked upon themselves as spiritual, or full of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. xiv. 37, 38. *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or* spiritual, *let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandment of the Lord; but if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

And although those who are spiritual amongst us have no infallible Apostle to admonish them, yet let me intreat them, by the love of Christ, calmly and impartially to weigh what may be said to them by one who is their hearty and fervent friend, (though an inferior worm) in giving his humble opinion concerning the errors that have been committed, by the zealous friends or promoters of this great work of God. In speaking of past errors, and those we are in danger of, I would, in the

First place, take notice of the *causes* whence the errors that attend a great revival of religion usually arise; and, as I go along, take notice of some particular errors that arise from each of those causes.

Secondly, Observe some errors that have been owing to the influence of several of those causes conjunctly.

The errors that attend a great revival of religion usually arise from these three things; 1. Undiscerned spiritual pride; 2. wrong principles; and 3. ignorance of Satan's advantages and devices.

SECT. I.

One cause of errors attending a great Revival of Religion, is undiscerned Spiritual Pride.

THE first and the worst cause of errors, that prevail in such a state of things, is *spiritual pride.* This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of religion. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit, to darken the mind and mislead the judgment. This is the main handle by which the devil has hold of religious persons, and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces, to clog and hinder a work of God.—This cause of error is the main spring, or at least the main support, of all the rest. Till this disease is cured, medicines are in vain applied to heal other diseases. It is by this that the mind defends itself in other errors, and guards itself against light, by which it might be corrected and reclaimed. The spiritually proud man is full of light already, he does not need instruction, and is ready to despise the offer of it. But, if this disease be healed, other things are easily rectified. The humble person is like a little child, he easily receives instruction; he is jealous over himself, sensible how liable he is to go astray, and therefore, if it be suggested to him that he does so, he is ready most narrowly and impartially to enquire. Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility, and so prepares the mind for true divine light without darkness, and so clears the eye to look on things as they truly are; Psal. xxv. 9. *The meek will he guide in judgment. And the meek will he teach his way.* Therefore we should fight, neither with small nor with great, but with the king of *Israel.* Our first care should be to rectify the heart, and pull the beam out of our eye, and then we shall see clearly.

I know that a great many things at this day are very injuriously laid to the pride of those that are zealous in the cause of God. When any person appears, in any respect, remarkably distinguished in religion from others; if he professes those spiritual comforts and joys that are greater than ordinary, or appears distinguishingly zealous in religion; if he exerts himself more than others in the cause of religion, or seems to be distinguished with success; ten to one but it will immediately awaken the jealousy of those about him. They will suspect

(whether they have cause or no) that he is very proud of his goodness, and affects to have it thought that no body is so good as he; and all his talk is heard, and all his behaviour beheld, with this prejudice. Those who are themselves cold and dead, and especially such as never had any experience of the power of Godliness on their own hearts, are ready to entertain such thoughts of the best Christians; which arises from a secret enmity against vital and fervent piety. But zealous Christians should take heed lest this prove a snare to them, and the devil take advantage from it, to blind their eyes from beholding what there is indeed of this nature in their hearts, and make them think, because they are charged with pride wrongfully and from an ill spirit, in many things, that therefore it is so in every thing. Alas, how much pride have the best of us in our hearts! It is the worst part of the body of sin and death; the first sin that ever entered into the universe, and the last that is rooted out: It is God's most stubborn enemy!

The corruption of nature may all be resolved into two things, *pride* and *worldly-mindedness*, the *devil* and the *beast*, or *self* and the *world*. These are the two pillars of *Dagon's* temple, on which the whole house leans. But the former of these is every way the worst part of the corruption of nature; it is the first born son of the devil, and his image in the heart of man chiefly consists in it. It is the last thing in a sinner that is overborne by conviction, in order to conversion; and here is the saint's hardest conflict; the last thing over which he obtains a good degree of conquest, that which most directly militates against God, and is most contrary to the Spirit of the Lamb of God. It is most like the devil its father, in a serpentine deceitfulness and secrecy; it lies deepest, is most active, and is most ready secretly to mix itself with every thing.

And, of all Kinds of Pride, spiritual Pride is upon many Accounts the most hateful, it is most like the Devil; most like the Sin he committed in a Heaven of Light and Glory, where he was exalted high in Divine Knowledge, Honour, Beauty and Happiness. Pride is much more difficult to be discerned than any other Corruption, because its Nature very much consists in a Person's having too high a thought of himself. No Wonder that he who has too high a thought of himself, does not know it; for he necessarily thinks that the opinion he has of himself has just Grounds, and therefore is not too high; if he thought such an opinion of himself was without just Grounds, he would

therein cease to have it. Those that are spiritually proud, have a high conceit of these two things, *viz.* their *light*, and their *humility*; both which are a strong prejudice against a discovery of their pride. Being proud of their *light*, that makes them not jealous of themselves; he who thinks a clear light shines around him, is not suspicious of an enemy lurking near him unseen, and then, being proud of their *humility*, that makes them least of all jealous of themselves in that particular, *viz.* as being under the prevalence of pride. There are many sins of the heart that are very secret in their Nature, and difficully discerned. The Psalmist says, *Psal.* xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.* But spiritual pride is the most secret of all sins. The heart is deceitful and unsearchable in nothing so much as in this matter; and there is no Sin in the world, that men are so confident in. The very nature of it is to work self-confidence, and drive away jealousy of any evil of that kind. There is no sin so much like the devil as this for secrecy and subtilty, and appearing in a great many shapes undiscerned and unsuspected. It appears as an Angel of light: takes occasion to arise from every thing; it perverts and abuses every thing, and even the exercises of real grace, and real humility, as an occasion to exert itself, it is a sin that has, as it were, many lives; if you kill it, it will live still; if you mortify and suppress it in one shape, it rises in another; if you think it is all gone, yet it is there still. There are a great many kinds of it, that lye in different forms and shapes, one under another, and encompass the heart like the coats of an onion; if you pull off one, there is another underneath. We had need therefore to have the greatest watch imaginable over our hearts with respect to this matter, and to cry most earnestly to the great searcher of hearts for his help. He that trusts his own heart is a fool.

God's own people should be the more jealous of themselves with respect to this particular at this day, because the temptations that many have to this sin are exceeding great. The great and distinguishing privileges to which God admits many of his saints, and the high honours he puts on some Ministers, are great trials of persons in this respect. It is true, that great degrees of the spiritual presence of God tends greatly to mortify pride and all corruption; but yet, though in the experience of such favours there be much to restrain pride one way, there is much to tempt and provoke it another; and we shall be in great danger thereby, without great watchfulness and prayerfulness. The angels that fell, while in heaven had great ho-

nours and high privileges, in beholding the face of God, and viewing his infinite glory, to cause in them exercises of humility, and to keep them from pride; yet, through want of watchfulness in them, their great honour and heavenly privilege proved to be to them an undoing temptation to pride, though they had no principle of pride in their hearts to expose them. Let no saint therefore, however eminent, and however near to God, think himself out of danger. He that thinks himself most out of danger, is indeed most in danger. The Apostle *Paul*, who doubtless was as eminent a Saint as any now, was not out of danger, even just after he was admitted to see God in the third heavens, 2 Cor. xii. and yet doubtless, what he saw in heaven of the ineffable glory of the Divine Being, had a direct tendency to make him appear exceeding little and vile in his own eyes.

Spiritual pride in its own nature is so secret, that it is not so well discerned by immediate intuition on the thing itself, as by the effects and fruits of it; some of which I would mention, together with the contrary fruits of pure Christian humility. Spiritual pride disposes to speak of other persons' sins, their enmity against God and his people, the miserable delusion of hypocrites and their enmity against vital piety, and the deadness of some saints, with bitterness, or with laughter and levity, and an air of contempt; whereas pure Christian humility rather disposes, either to be silent about them, or to speak of them with grief and pity. Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others; whereas a humble Saint is most jealous of himself, he is so suspicious of nothing in the world as he is of his own heart. The spiritually proud person is apt to find fault with other saints, that they are low in grace; and to be much in observing how cold and dead they are; and being quick to discern and take notice of their deficiences. But the eminently humble Christian has so much to do at home, and sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it, that he is not apt to be very busy with other hearts; he complains most of himself, and complains of his own coldness and lowness in grace. He is apt to esteem others better than himself, and is ready to hope that there is nobody but what has more love and thankfulness to God than he, and cannot bear to think that others should bring forth no more fruit to God's honour than he. Some who have spiritual pride mixed with high discoveries and great transports of joy, disposing them in an earnest manner to talk to others, are apt, in such frames, to be calling upon other Christians about them, and sharply reproving them

for their being so cold and lifeless. There are others, who in their raptures are overwhelmed with a sense of their own vileness; and, when they have extraordinary discoveries of God's glory, are all taken up about their own sinfulness; and though they also are disposed to speak much and very earnestly, yet it is very much in blaming themselves, and exhorting fellow-christians, but in a charitable and humble manner. Pure Christian humility disposes a person to take notice of every thing that is good in others, and to make the best of it, and to diminish their failings; but to have his eye chiefly on those things that are bad in himself, and to take much notice of every thing that aggravates them.

In a contrariety to this, it has been the manner in some places, or at least the manner of some persons, to speak of almost every thing that they see amiss in others, in the most harsh, severe and terrible language. It is frequent with them to say of others opinions or conduct or advice—or of their coldness, their silence, their caution, their moderation, their prudence, &c. that they are from the devil, or from hell; that such a thing is devilish or hellish, or cursed, and that such persons are serving the devil, or the devil is in them, that they are soul murderers and the like; so that the words *devil* and *hell* are almost continually in their mouths. And such kind of language they will commonly use, not only towards wicked men, but towards them whom they themselves allow to be the true children of God, and also towards ministers of the gospel and others who are very much their superiors. And they look upon it as a virtue and high attainment thus to behave themselves. *Oh*, say they, *we must be plain-hearted and bold for Christ, we must declare war against sin wherever we see it, we must not mince the matter in the cause of God and when speaking for Christ.* And to make any distinction in persons, or to speak the more tenderly, because that which is amiss is seen in a superior, they look upon as very mean for a follower of Christ when speaking in the cause of his master. What a strange device of the devil is here, to overthrow all Christian meekness and gentleness, and even all shew and appearance of it, and to defile the mouths of the children of God, and to introduce the language of common sailors among the followers of Christ, under a cloak of high sanctity and zeal and boldness for Christ! And it is a remarkable instance of the weakness of the human mind, and how much too cunning the devil is for us!

The grand defence of this way of talking is, That they

say no more than what is true; they only speak the truth without mincing the matter; and that true Christians who have a great sight of the evil of sin, and acquaintance with their own hearts, know it to be true, and therefore will not be offended to hear such harsh expressions concerning them and their sins. It is only (say they) hypocrites, or cold and dead Christians, that are provoked and feel their enmity rise on such an occasion. But it is a grand mistake to think that we may commonly use all such language as represents the worst of each other, according to strict truth. It is really true, that every kind of sin, and every degree of it, is devilish and from hell, and is cursed, hellish, and condemned or damned. And if persons had a full sight of their hearts, they would think no terms too bad for them; they would look like beasts, like serpents, and like devils to themselves; they would be at a loss for language to express what they see in themselves. The worst terms they could think of would seem as it were faint to represent what they see in themselves. But shall a child therefore, from time to time, use such language concerning an excellent and eminently holy father or mother, as, That the devil is in them; that they have such and such devilish, cursed dispositions; that they commit every day hundreds of hellish, damned acts; and that they are cursed dogs, hell hounds and devils? And shall the meanest of the people be justified, in commonly using such language concerning the most excellent magistrates, or their most eminent ministers? I hope nobody has gone to this height. But the same pretences of boldness, plain-heartedness, and declared war against sin, will as well justify these things as the others. If we proceed in such a manner, on such principles as these, what a face will be introduced upon the church of Christ, the little beloved flock of that gentle shepherd the Lamb of God? What a sound shall we bring into the house of God, into the family of his dear little children? How far off shall we soon banish that lovely appearance of humility, sweetness, gentleness, mutual honour, benevolence, complacence, and an esteem of others above themselves, which ought to clothe the children of God all over? Not but that Christians should watch over one another, and in any wise reprove one another, and do it plainly and faithfully; but it does not thence follow that dear brethren in the family of God, in rebuking one another, should use worse language then *Michael* the Archangel durst use when rebuking the devil himself.

Christians who are but fellow-worms, ought at least to treat one another with as much humility and gentleness as Christ, who is infinitely above them, treats them. But how did Christ treat his disciples when they were so cold towards him, and so regardless of him, at the time when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death—and he in a dismal agony was crying and sweating blood for them—and they would not watch with him and allow him the comfort of their company one hour in his great distress, though he once and again desired it of them? One would think that then was a proper time, if ever, to have reproved them for a devilish, hellish, cursed and damned slothfulness and deadness. But after what manner does Christ reprove them? Behold his astonishing gentleness! Says he, *What, could ye not watch with me one hour? The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* And how did he treat *Peter* when he was ashamed of his master, while he was made a mocking stock and a spitting stock for him? Why, he looked upon him with a look of love, and melted his heart. And though we read that Christ once *turned, and said unto* Peter, on a certain occasion, *Get thee behind me, Satan*; and this may seem like an instance of harshness and severity in reproving *Peter;* yet I humbly conceive that this is by many taken wrong, and that this is indeed no instance of Christ's severity in his treatment of *Peter*, but on the contrary of his wonderful gentleness and grace, distinguishing between *Peter* and the devil in him, not laying the blame of what *Peter* had then said, or imputing it to him, but to the devil that influenced him. Christ saw the devil then present, secretly influencing *Peter* to do the part of a tempter to his master; and therefore Christ turned him about to *Peter*, in whom the devil then was, and spake to the devil, and rebuked him. Thus the grace of Christ does not behold iniquity in his people, imputes not what is amiss in them to them, but to sin that dwells in them, and to *Satan* that influences them.

Spiritual pride often disposes persons to singularity in external appearance, to affect a singular way of speaking, to use a different sort of dialect from others, or to be singular in voice, countenance, or behaviour. But he that is an eminently humble Christian, though he will be firm to his duty, however singular—going in the way that leads to heaven alone, though all the world forsake him—yet he delights not in singularity for singularity's sake. He does not affect to set up himself to be viewed and observed as one distinguished, as desiring to be accounted better than others—despising their company, or

conformity to them—but on the contrary is disposed to become all things to all men, to yield to others, and conform to them and please them, in every thing but sin. Spiritual pride commonly occasions a certain stiffness and inflexibility in persons, in their own judgment and their own ways; whereas the eminently humble person, though he be inflexible in his duty, and in those things wherein God's honour is concerned; and with regard to temptation to those things he apprehends to be sinful, though in never so small a degree, he is not at all of a yielding spirit, but is like a brazen wall; yet in other things he is of a pliable disposition, not disposed to set up his own opinion, or his own will; he is ready to pay deference to others' opinions, loves to comply with their inclinations, and has a heart that is tender and flexible, like a little child. Spiritual pride disposes persons to affect separation, to stand at a distance from others, as being better than they; and loves the shew and appearance of the distinction. But, on the contrary, the eminently humble Christian is ready to look upon himself as not worthy that others should be united to him—to think himself more brutish than any man, and worthy to be cast out of human society—and especially unworthy of the society of God's children.—And though he will not be a companion with one that is visibly Christ's enemy—but delights most in the company of lively Christians, choosing such for his companions, and will be most intimate with them, not delighting to spend much time in the company of those who seem to relish no conversation but about worldly things—yet he does not love the appearance of an open separation from visible Christians, as being a kind of distinct company from them who are one visible company with him by Christ's appointment; and will as much as possible shun all appearances of a superiority, or distinguishing himself as better than others. His universal benevolence delights in the appearance of union with his fellow-creatures, and will maintain it as much as he possibly can, without giving open countenance to iniquity, or wounding his own soul. And herein he follows the example of his meek and lowly Redeemer, who did not keep up such a separation and distance as the *Pharisees*, but freely ate with publicans and sinners, that he might win them.

The eminently humble Christian is as it were clothed with lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behaviour, and with a soft, sweet, condescending, winning air and deportment; these things are just like garments to him, he is clothed all over with them. 1 Pet. v. 5. *And be clothed*

with humility. Col. iii. 12. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.* Pure Christian humility has no such thing as roughness, or contempt, or fierceness, or bitterness in its nature; it makes a person like a little child, harmless and innocent, that none need to be afraid of; or like a lamb, destitute of all bitterness, wrath, anger and clamour; agreeable to Eph. iv. 31. With such a spirit as this ought especially zealous ministers of the gospel to be clothed, and those that God is pleased to employ as instruments in his hands of promoting his work. They ought indeed to be thorough in preaching the word of God, without mincing the matter at all; in handling the sword of the spirit, as the ministers of the Lord of hosts, they ought not to be mild and gentle; they are not to be gentle and moderate in searching and awakening the conscience, but should be sons of thunder. The word of God, which is in itself sharper than any two-edged sword, ought not to be sheathed by its ministers, but so used that its sharp edges may have their full effect, even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow. Yet they should do it without judging particular persons, leaving it to conscience and the Spirit of God to make the particular application. But all their conversation should savour of nothing but lowliness and good-will, love and pity to all mankind; so that such a spirit should be like a sweet odour diffused around them wherever they go. They should be like lions to guilty consciences, but like lambs to men's persons. This would have no tendency to prevent the awakening of men's consciences, but on the contrary would have a very great tendency to awaken them. It would make way for the sharp sword to enter; it would remove the obstacles, and make a naked breast for the arrow.—Yea, the amiable Christ-like conversation of such ministers in itself, would terrify the consciences of men, as well as their terrible preaching; both would co-operate, to subdue the hard, and bring down the proud heart. If there had been constantly and universally observable such a behaviour as this in itinerant preachers, it would have terrified the consciences of sinners ten times as much as all the invectives and the censorious talk there has been concerning particular persons, for their opposition, hypocrisy, delusion, pharisaism, &c. These things in general have rather stupified sinners' consciences; they take them up, and make use of them as a shield, wherewith to defend themselves from the sharp arrows of the word that are shot by these preachers. The enemies of the present

work have been glad of these things with all their hearts.—Many of the most bitter of them are probably such as in the beginning of this work had their consciences something galled and terrified with it; but these errors of awakening preachers are the things they chiefly make use of as plaisters to heal the sore that was made in their consciences.

Spiritual pride takes great notice of opposition and injuries that are received, and is apt to be often speaking of them, and to be much in taking notice of their aggravations, either with an air of bitterness or contempt. Whereas pure, unmixed Christian humility, disposes a person rather to be like his blessed Lord, when reviled, dumb, not opening his mouth, but committing himself in silence to him that judgeth righteously. The eminently humble Christian, the more clamorous and furious the world is against him, the more silent and still will he be; unless it be in his closet, and there he will not be still.—Our blessed Lord Jesus seems never to have been so silent as when the world compassed him round, reproaching, buffeting and spitting on him, with loud and virulent outcries, and horrid cruelties. There has been a great deal too much talk of late, among many of the true and zealous friends of religion, about opposition and persecution. It becomes the followers of the Lamb of God, when the world is in an uproar about them, and full of clamour against them, not to raise another noise to answer it, but to be still and quiet. It is not beautiful, at such time, to have pulpits and conversation ring with the sound of *persecution, persecution,* or with abundant talk about *Pharisees,* carnal persecutors, and the seed of the serpent.—Meekness and quietness among God's people, when opposed and reviled, would be the surest way to have God remarkably to appear for their defence. It is particularly observed of *Moses,* on occasion of *Aaron* and *Miriam* envying him, and rising up in opposition against him, that he *was very meek, above all men upon the face of the earth,* Num. xii. 3. Doubtless because he remarkably shewed his meekness on that occasion, being wholly silent under the abuse. And how remarkable is the account that follows of God's being as it were suddenly roused to appear for his vindication? What high honour did he put upon *Moses?* and how severe were his rebukes of his opposers? The story is very remarkable, and worthy every one's observation. Nothing is so effectual to bring God down from heaven in the defence of his people, as their patience and meekness under sufferings. When Christ *girds his sword upon his thigh, with his glory and majesty, and in his majesty rides*

prosperously, his right hand teaching him terrible things, it is because of Truth and MEEKNESS and Righteousness, Psal. xlv. 3, 4. *God will cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth shall fear and be still, and God will arise to judgment,* to save all the MEEK of the earth, Psal. lxxvi. 8, 9. *He will lift up the* meek, *and cast the wicked down to the ground,* Psal. cxlvii. 6. *He will reprove with equity for the* meek of the earth, *and will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips will he slay the wicked,* Isa. xi. 4. The great commendation that Christ gives the church of *Philadelphia* is, *Thou hast kept the word of my patience,* Rev. iii. 10. And we may see what reward he promises her, in the preceding verse, *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship at thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.* And thus it is that we might expect to have Christ appear for us, if under all the reproaches we are loaded with, we behaved ourselves with a lamb-like meekness and gentleness. But if our spirits are raised, and we are vehement and noisy with our complaints under colour of Christian zeal, this will be to take upon us our own defence, and God will leave it with us, to vindicate our cause as well as we can; yea, if we go on in a way of bitterness, and high censuring, it will be the way to have him rebuke us, and put us to shame before our enemies.

Here some may be ready to say, "It is not in our own cause that we are thus vehement, but it is in the cause of God, and the Apostle directed the primitive Christians to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints.*" But how was it that the primitive Christians contended earnestly for the faith? They defended the truth with arguments and a holy conversation, but yet gave their reasons with meekness and fear. They contended earnestly for the faith, by fighting violently against their own unbelief, and the corruptions of their hearts: yea, they resisted unto blood striving against sin; but the blood that was shed in this earnest strife, was their own blood, and not the blood of their enemies. It was *in the cause of God* that *Peter* was so fierce, and drew his sword, and began to smite with it; but Christ bids him put up his sword again, telling him that they that take the sword shall perish by the sword; and, while *Peter* wounds, Christ heals. They contend the most violently, and are the greatest conquerors in a time of persecution, who bear it with the greatest meekness and patience. Great humility improves even the reflections

and reproaches of enemies, to put upon serious self-examination, whether or no there be not some just cause; whether they have not in some respect given occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully. Whereas spiritual pride improves such reflections to make them the more bold and confident, and to go the greater lengths in that for which they are found fault with. I desire it may be considered, whether there has been nothing amiss of late among the true friends of vital piety in this respect; and whether the words of *David*, when reviled by *Michael*, have not been misinterpreted and misapplied to justify them in it, when he said, *I will be yet more vile, and will be base in mine own sight.* The import of his words is, that he would humble himself yet more before God, being sensible that he was far from being sufficiently abased; and he signifies this to *Michael*, that he longed to be yet lower, and had designed already to abase himself more in his behaviour.—Not that he would go the greater length, to shew his regardlessness of her revilings; that would be to exalt himself, and not to abase himself as more vile in his own sight.

Another effect of spiritual pride is a certain unsuitable and self-confident boldness before God and men. Thus some, in their great rejoicings before God, have not paid a sufficient regard to that rule in Psal ii. 11. They have not rejoiced with a reverential trembling, in a proper sense of the awful majesty of God, and the awful distance between him and them. And there has also been an improper boldness before men, that has been encouraged and defended, by a misapplication of that scripture, Prov. xxix. 25. *The fear of man bringeth a snare.* As though it became all persons, high and low, men, women and children, in all religious conversation, wholly to divest themselves of all manner of shamefacedness, modesty or reverence towards man; which is a great error, and quite contrary to scripture. There is a fear of reverence that is due to some men, Rom. xiii. 7. *Fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.* And there is a fear of modesty and shamefacedness in inferiors towards superiors, which is amiable, and required by Christian rules, 1 Pet. iii. 2. *While they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear;* and 1 Tim. ii. 9. *In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.* The Apostle means that this virtue shall have place, not only in civil communication, but also in spiritual communication, and in our religious concerns and behaviour, as is evident by what follows, v. 11, 12. *Let the women learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to*

teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. Not that I would hence infer that women's mouths should be shut up from Christian conversation; but all that I mean from it at this time is, that modesty, or shamefacedness, and reverence towards men, ought to have some place, even in our religious communication one with another. The same is also evident by 1 Pet. iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.* It is well if that very fear and shamefacedness, which the Apostle recommends, have not sometimes been condemned, under the name of a *cursed fear of man.*

It is beautiful for persons, when they are at prayer as the mouth of others, to make God only their fear and their dread, and to be wholly forgetful of men present, who, let them be great or small, are nothing in the presence of the great God. And it is beautiful for a minister, when he speaks in the name of the Lord of hosts, to be bold, and to put off all fear of men. And it is beautiful in private Christians, though they are women and even children, to be bold in professing the faith of Christ, in the practice of all religion, and in owning God's hand in the work of his power and grace, without any fear of men; though they should be reproached as fools and madmen, frowned upon by great men, and cast off by parents and all the world. But for private Christians, women and others, to instruct, rebuke and exhort, with a like sort of boldness as becomes a minister when preaching, is not beautiful. Some have been bold in things that have really been errors; and have gloried in their boldness in practising them, though odd and irregular. And those who have gone the greatest lengths in these things, have been by some most highly esteemed, as appearing bold for the Lord Jesus Christ, and fully on his side; while others who have professed to be godly, and who have condemned such things, have been spoken of as enemies of the cross of Christ, or at least very cold and dead; and thus many, that of themselves were not inclined to such practices, have by this means been driven on, being ashamed to be behind, and accounted poor soldiers for Christ.

Another effect of spiritual pride is to make the subject of it *assuming*. It oftentimes makes it natural to persons so to act and speak, as though in a special manner it belonged to them to be taken notice of and much regarded. It is very natural to a person that is much under the influence of spiritual pride, to take all the respect that is paid him. If others shew

a disposition to submit to him, and yield him the deference of a preceptor, he is open to it, and freely admits it; yea, it is natural for him to expect such treatment, and to take much notice if he fails of it, and to have an ill opinion of others that do not pay him that which he looks upon as his prerogative.—He is apt to think that it belongs to him to speak, and to clothe himself with a judicial and dogmatical air in conversation, and to take it upon him, as what belongs to him, to give forth his sentence, and to determine and decide. Whereas pure Christian humility *vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly*, and is apt to *prefer others in honour*. One under the influence of spiritual pride is more apt to instruct others, than to enquire for himself, and naturally puts on the airs of a master. Whereas one that is full of pure humility, naturally has on the air of a disciple; his voice is, "What shall I do? What shall I do that I may live more to God's honour? What shall I do with this wicked heart?" He is ready to receive instruction from any body, agreeable to Jam. 1. 19. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.* The eminently humble Christian thinks he wants help from every body, whereas he that is spiritually proud thinks that every body wants his help. Christian humility, under a sense of others misery, intreats and beseeches; but spiritual pride affects to command, and warn with authority. There ought to be the utmost watchfulness against all such appearances of spiritual pride, in all that profess to have been the subjects of this work, and especially in the promoters of it, but above all in itinerant preachers. The most eminent gifts, and highest tokens of God's favour and blessing, will not excuse them.—Alas! What is man at his best estate! What is the most highly favoured Christian, or the most eminent and successful minister, that he should now think he is sufficient for something, and somebody to be regarded; and that he should go forth, and act among his fellow creatures as if he were wise and strong and good!

Ministers who have been the principal instruments of carrying on this glorious revival of religion, and whom God has made use of to bring up his people as it were out of *Egypt*, should take heed, that they do not provoke God, as *Moses* did, by assuming too much to themselves, and by their intemperate zeal to shut them out from seeing the good things that God is going to do for his church in this world. The fruits of *Moses's* unbelief, which provoked God to shut him out of *Canaan*,

and not to suffer him to partake of those great things God was about to do for *Israel*, were chiefly these two things:—*First*, His mingling bitterness with his zeal. He had a great zeal for God, and he could not bear to see the intolerable stiff-neckedness of the people, that they did not acknowledge the work of God, and were not convinced by all his wonders that they had seen. But human passion was mingled with his zeal, Psal. cvi. 32, 33. *They angered him also at the waters of strife; so that it went ill with* Moses *for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Hear now ye rebels*, says he, with bitterness of language.—*Secondly*, He behaved himself, and spake with an assuming air. He assumed too much to himself; *Hear now ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock?* Spiritual pride wrought in *Moses* at that time. His temptations to it were very great; for he had had great discoveries of God, and had been privileged with intimate and sweet communion with him, and God had made him the instrument of great good to his church. But though he was so humble a person, and, by God's own testimony, meek above all men upon the face of the whole earth, yet his temptations were too strong for him. Which surely should make our young ministers, that have of late been highly favoured, and have had great success, exceeding careful, and distrustful of themselves. Alas! how far are we from having the strength of holy, meek, aged *Moses!* The temptation at this day is exceeding great to both those errors that *Moses* was guilty of. There is great temptation to bitterness and corrupt passion with zeal; for there is so much unreasonable opposition made against this glorious work of God, and so much stiff-neckedness manifested in multitudes of this generation, notwithstanding all the great and wonderful works in which God has passed before them, that it greatly tends to provoke the spirits of such as have the interest of this work at heart, so as to move them to speak unadvisedly with their lips. And there is also great temptation to an assuming behaviour in some persons. When a minister is greatly succeeded from time to time, and so draws the eyes of the multitude upon him, when he sees himself followed, resorted to as an oracle—and people ready to adore him, and as it were to offer sacrifice to him, as it was with *Paul* and *Barnabas* at *Lystra*—it is almost impossible for a man to avoid taking upon him the airs of a master, or some extraordinary person; a man had need to have a great stock of humility, and much Divine assistance, to resist the temptation. But the greater our dangers are, the more ought

to be our watchfulness, prayerfulness, and diffidence, lest we bring ourselves into mischief. Fishermen who have been very successful, having caught a great many fish, had need to be careful that they do not at length begin to burn incense to their net. And we should take warning by *Gideon*, who after God had highly favoured and exalted him, and made him the instrument of working a wonderful deliverance for his people, at length made a god of the spoils of his enemies, which became a snare to him and to his house, so as to prove the ruin of his family.

All young ministers, in this day of bringing up the ark of God, should take warning by the example of a young *Levite* in *Israel*, *Uzza* the son of *Abinadab*. He seemed to have a real concern for the ark of God, and to be zealous and engaged in his mind on that joyful occasion of bringing it up. God made him an instrument to bring the Ark out of its long continued obscurity in *Kirjath-jearim*, and he was succeeded to bring it a considerable way towards Mount *Zion*; but for his want of humility, reverence and circumspection, and assuming or taking too much upon him, God broke forth upon him, and smote him for his error, so that he never lived to see and partake of the great joy of his church on occasion of the carrying up the Ark into Mount *Zion*, and the great blessings of heaven upon *Israel* consequent upon it. Ministers employed to carry on this work, have been chiefly of the younger sort, who have doubtless (as *Uzza* had) a real concern for the Ark; and it is evident that they are much animated and engaged in their minds (as he was) in this joyful day of bringing up the Ark.—They are afraid what will become of the ark under the conduct of its ministers: They see it shakes, and they are afraid these blundering oxen will throw it. Some of them it is to be feared, have been over-officious on this occasion, have assumed too much to themselves, and have been bold to put forth their hand to take hold of the ark, as though they were the only fit and worthy persons to defend it. If young ministers had great humility, without a corrupt mixture, it would dispose them especially to treat aged ministers with respect and reverence, as their fathers, notwithstanding that a sovereign God may have given themselves greater assistance and success, 1 Pet. v. 5. *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another; and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* Lev. xix. 32. *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary*

head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God; I am the Lord.

As spiritual pride disposes persons to assume much to themselves, so it also disposes them to treat others with neglect. On the contrary, pure Christian humility disposes persons to honour all men, agreeable to that rule, 1 Pet. ii 17. There has been in some, who I believe are true friends of religion, too great appearance of this fruit of spiritual pride, in their treatment of those whom they looked upon to be carnal men; and particularly in refusing to enter into any discourse or reasoning with them. Indeed to spend a great deal of time in jangling and warm debates about religion, is not the way to propagate, but to hinder it; and some are so dreadfully set against this work, that it is a dismal task to dispute with them; all that one can say is utterly in vain. I have found it so by experience. To enter into disputes about religion, at some times, is quite unseasonable; particularly in meetings for religious conference, or exercises of worship. But yet we ought to be very careful that we do not refuse to discourse with men, with any appearance of a supercilious neglect, as though we counted them not worthy to be regarded; on the contrary, we should condescend to carnal men, as Christ has condescended to us, to bear with our unteachableness and stupidity.—He still follows us with instructions, line upon line, and precept upon precept, saying, *Come let us reason together:* setting light before us, and using all manner of arguments with us, and waiting upon such dull scholars, as it were hoping that we should receive light. We should be ready with meekness and calmness, without hot disputing, to give our reasons, why we think this work is the work of God, to carnal men when they ask us, and not turn them by as not worthy to be talked with; as the Apostle directed the primitive Christians to be ready to give a reason of the Christian faith and hope to the enemies of Christianity, 1 Pet. iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.* And we ought not to condemn all reasoning about things of religion under the name of carnal reason. For my part, I desire no better than that those who oppose this work should fairly submit to have the cause betwixt us tried by strict reasoning.

One qualification that the scripture speaks of once and again, as requisite in a minister, is, that he should be (διδακτικὸν) *apt to teach*, 1 Tim. iii. 2. And the Apostle seems to explain what he means by it, in 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. or at least there ex-

presses one thing that he intends by it, *viz.* That a minister should be ready, meekly to condescend to and instruct opposers; *And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.*

SECT. II.

Another cause of errors in conduct attending a Religious Revival, is the adoption of wrong Principles.

ONE erroneous principle, than which scarce any has proved more mischievous to the present glorious work of God, is a notion that it is God's manner in these days, to guide his saints, at least some that are more eminent, by inspiration, or immediate revelation. They suppose he makes known to them what shall come to pass hereafter, or what it is his will that they should do, by impressions made upon their minds, either with or without texts of scripture; whereby something is made known to them, that is not taught in the scripture. By such a notion the devil has a great door opened for him; and if once this opinion should come to be fully yielded to, and established in the church of God, satan would have opportunity thereby to set up himself as the guide and oracle of God's people, and to have *his* word regarded as their infallible rule, and so to lead them where he would, and to introduce what he pleased, and soon to bring the bible into neglect and contempt.——Late experience, in some instances, has shown that the tendency of this notion is to cause persons to esteem the bible as in a great measure useless.

This error will defend and support all errors. As long as a person has a notion that he is guided by immediate direction from heaven, it makes him incorrigible and impregnable in all his misconduct For what signifies it, for poor blind worms of the dust, to go to argue with a man, and endeavour to convince him and correct him, that is guided by the immediate counsels and commands of the great JEHOVAH? This great work of God has been exceedingly hindered by this error; and, till we have quite taken this handle out of the devil's hands, the work of God will never go on without great clogs and hindrances.—Satan will always have a vast advantage in his hands against it, and as he has improved it hitherto, so he will do still. And it

is evident, that the devil knows the vast advantage he has by it, that makes him exceeding loth to let go his hold.

It is strange what a disposition there is in many well-disposed and religious persons to fall in with and hold fast this notion. It is enough to astonish one, that such multiplied, plain instances of the failing of such supposed revelations in the event, do not open every one's eyes. I have seen so many instances of the failing of such impressions, that would almost furnish a history. I have been acquainted with them when made under all kinds of circumstances, and have seen them fail in the event, when made with such circumstances as have been fairest and brightest, and most promising. They have been made upon the minds of apparently eminent saints, and with an excellent heavenly frame of spirit yet continued, and made with texts of scripture that seemed exceeding opposite, yea, many texts following one another, extraordinarily and wonderfully brought to the mind, and the impressions repeated over and over; and yet all has most manifestly come to nothing, to the full conviction of the persons themselves. God has in so many instances of late, in his providence, covered such things with darkness, that one would think it should be enough quite to blank the expectations of those who have been ready to think highly of such things. It seems to be a testimony of God, that he has no design of reviving revelations in his church, and a rebuke from him to the groundless expectations of it.

It seems to me that Zech. xiii. 5. is a prophecy concerning ministers of the gospel in the latter and glorious day of the Christian church, (which is evidently spoken of in this and the foregoing chapters) The words, I apprehend, are to be interpreted in a spiritual sense. *I am an husbandman:* The work of ministers is very often, in the New Testament, compared to the business of the husbandman, that take care of God's husbandry, to whom he lets out his vineyard, and sends them forth to labour in his field, where one plants and another waters, one sows and another reaps; so ministers are called labourers in God's harvest. And as it is added, *Men taught me to keep cattle from my youth;* so the work of a minister is very often in scripture represented by the business of a shepherd or pastor. And whereas it is said, *I am no prophet; but man taught me from my youth:* it is as much as to say, I do not pretend to have received my skill, whereby I am fitted for the business of a pastor or shepherd in the church of God, by immediate inspiration, but by education, by being trained up

to the business by human learning, and instructions received from my youth or childhood, by ordinary means.

And why cannot we be contented with the divine oracles, that holy, pure word of God, which we have in such abundance and clearness, now since the canon of scripture is compleated? Why should we desire to have any thing added to them by impulses from above? Why should we not rest in that standing rule that God has given to his church, which, the Apostle teaches us, is surer than a voice from heaven? And why should we desire to make the scripture speak more to us than it does? Or why should any desire a higher kind of intercourse with heaven, than by having the Holy Spirit given in his sanctifying influences, infusing and exciting grace and holiness, love and joy, which is the highest kind of intercourse that the saints and angels in heaven have with God, and the chief excellency of the glorified man Christ Jesus?

Some that follow impulses and impressions indulge a notion, that they do no other than follow the guidance of God's word, because the impression is made with a text of scripture that comes to their mind. But they take that text as it is impressed on their minds, and improve it as a new revelation to all intents and purposes; while the text, as it is in the bible, implies no such thing, and they themselves do not suppose that any such revelation was contained in it before. Suppose, for instance, that text should come into a person's mind with strong impression, Acts ix. 6. *Arise, and go into the city; and it shall be told thee what thou must do;* and he should interpret it as an immediate signification of the will of God, that he should now forthwith go to such a neighbour town, and there he should meet with a further discovery of his duty. If such things as these are revealed by the impression of these words, it is to all intents a new revelation, not the less because certain words of scripture are made use of in the case. Here are propositions or truths entirely new, that those words do not contain. These propositions, That it is God's mind and will that such a person by name should arise at such a time, and go to such a place, and that there he should meet with discoveries, are entirely new propositions, wholly different from those contained in that text of scripture. They are no more implied in the words themselves, without a new revelation, than it is implied that he should arise and go to any other place, or that any other person should arise and go to that place. The propositions, supposed to be now revealed, are as really different from those contained in that scripture, as they are from the

propositions contained in that text, Gen. v. 6. *And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos.* This is quite a different thing from the spirit's inlightning the mind to understand the words of God, and know what is contained and revealed in them, and what consequences may justly be drawn from them, and to see how they are applicable to our case and circumstances; which is done without any new revelation, only by enabling the mind to understand and apply a revelation already made.

Those texts of scripture, that speak of the children of God as *led by the spirit*, have been by some brought to defend such impulses; particularly Rom. viii. 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God:* And, Gal. v. 18. *But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.* But these texts themselves confute them that bring them; for it is evident that the leading of the spirit which the Apostle speaks of is peculiar to the children of God, and that natural men cannot have; for he speaks of it as a sure evidence of their being the sons of God, and not under the law. But a leading or directing of a person by immediately revealing to him where he should go, or what shall hereafter come to pass, or what shall be the future consequence of his doing thus or thus, if there be any such thing in these days, is not of the nature of the gracious leading of the Spirit of God, peculiar to God's children. It is no more than a common gift; there is nothing in it but what natural men are capable of, and many of them have had in the days of inspiration. A man may have ten thousand such revelations and directions from the Spirit of God, and yet not have a jot of grace in his heart. It is no more than the gift of prophecy, which immediately reveals what will be, or should be hereafter; but this is only a common gift, as the Apostle expressly shews, 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 8. If a person has any thing revealed to him from God, or is directed to any thing by a voice from heaven, or a whisper, or words immediately suggested to his mind, there is nothing of the nature of grace merely in this; it is of the nature of a common influence of the spirit, and is but dross in comparison of the excellency of that gracious leading of the spirit that the saints have. Such a way of being directed where one shall go, and what he shall do, is no more than what *Balaam* had from God, who from time to time revealed to him what he should do; so that he was in this sense led by the Spirit for a considerable time.. There is *a more excellent way* in which the Spirit leads *the sons of God*, that natural men cannot have; and that is by inclining them

to do the will of God, and go in the shining path of truth and christian holiness, from a holy heavenly disposition, which the spirit of God gives them, and which inclines and leads them to those things that are excellent and agreeable to God's mind, whereby they *are transformed by the renewing of their minds, and prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, Rom.* xii. 2. And so the spirit of God does in a gracious manner teach the saints their duty; and he teaches them in a higher manner than ever *Balaam*, or *Saul*, or *Judas* were taught. The spirit of God enlightens them with respect to their duty, by making their eye single and pure, whereby the whole body is full of light. The sanctifying influence of the spirit of God rectifies the taste of the soul, whereby it savours those things that are of God, and naturally relishes and delights in those things that are holy and agreeable to God's mind; and, like one of a distinguishing taste, it chuses those things that are good and wholesome, and rejects those that are evil. The sanctified ear tries words, and the sanctified heart tries actions, as the mouth tastes meat. And thus the spirit of God leads and guides the meek in his way, agreeable to his promises; he enables them to understand the commands and counsels of his word, and rightly to apply them. Christ blames the *Pharisees* that they had not this holy distinguishing taste, to discern and distinguish what was right and wrong, *Luke* xii. 57. *yea, and why even of your own selves judge ye not what is right?*

The leading of the spirit which God gives his children, and which is peculiar to them, is that teaching them his statutes, and causing them to understand the way of his precepts, which the psalmist so very often prays for, especially in the 119th *psalm*: and not in giving them *new statutes* and *new precepts*. He graciously gives them eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand; he causes them to understand the fear of the Lord, and so *brings the blind by a way they knew not, and leads them in paths that they had not known, and makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*. So the assistance of the spirit in praying and preaching seems by some to have been greatly misunderstood, and they have sought after a miraculous assistance of inspiration, by the immediate suggesting of words to them, by such gifts and influences of the spirit, in praying and teaching, as the apostle speaks of, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 14, 26. (which many natural men had in those days) instead of a gracious holy assistance of the spirit of God, which is the far *more excellent way*; (as 1 *Cor.* xii. 31. & xiii. 1.) the gracious and

most excellent assistance of the spirit of God in praying and preaching, is not by immediately suggesting words to the apprehension, which may be with a cold dead heart; but by warming the heart, and filling it with a great sense of things to be spoken, and with holy affections, that these may suggest words. Thus indeed the spirit of God may be said, indirectly and mediately, to suggest words to us, to indite our petitions for us, and to teach the preacher what to say; he fills the heart, and that fills the mouth. We know that when men are greatly affected in any matter, and their hearts are very full, it fills them with matter for speech, and makes them eloquent upon that subject; and much more have spiritual affections this tendency, for many reasons that might be given. When a person is in a holy and lively frame in secret prayer, or in christian conversation, it will wonderfully supply him with matter, and with expressions, as every true christian knows; and it has the like tendency to enable a person in public prayer and preaching. And, if he has these holy influences of the spirit on his heart in an high Degree, nothing in the world will have so great a tendency to make both the matter and manner of his public performances excellent and profitable. But, since there is no immediate suggesting of words from the spirit of God to be expected or desired, they who neglect and despise study and premeditation, in order to a preparation for the pulpit, in such an expectation, are guilty of presumption: though doubtless it may be lawful for some persons, in some cases, (and they may be called to it) to preach with very little study; and the spirit of God, by the heavenly frame of heart that he gives them, may enable them to do it to excellent purpose. Besides this most excellent way of the spirit of God assisting ministers in public performances, which (considered as the preacher's privilege) far excels inspiration, there is a common assistance which natural men may have in these days, and which the godly may have intermingled with a gracious assistance, which is also very different from inspiration, and that is his assisting natural principles; as the natural apprehension, reason, memory, conscience and natural affection.

But, to return to the head of impressions and immediate revelations; many lay themselves open to a delusion by expecting direction from heaven in this way, and waiting for it. In such a case it is easy for persons to imagine that they have it. They are perhaps at a loss concerning something, undetermined what they shall do, or what course they shall take in some affair; and they pray to God to direct them, and make known to them

his mind and will: and then, instead of expecting to be directed, by being assisted in considering the rules of God's word, his providence, and their circumstances, to look on things in a true light, and justly to weigh them, they are waiting for some secret immediate influence, unaccountably swaying their minds, and turning their thoughts or inclinations that way in which God would have them to go. Hereby they are exposed to two things; *first*, they lay themselves open to the devil, and give him a fair opportunity to lead them where he pleases; for they stand ready to follow the first extraordinary impulse that they shall have, groundlessly concluding it is from God. And, *secondly*, they are greatly exposed to be deceived by their own imaginations: for such an expectation awakens and quickens the imagination: and that oftentimes is called an uncommon impression, that is no such thing; and they ascribe that to the agency of some invisible being, which is owing only to themselves.

Again, another way that many have been deceived, is by drawing false conclusions from true premises. Many true and eminent saints have been led into mistakes and snares, by arguing that they have prayed in faith. They have indeed been greatly assisted in prayer for such a particular mercy, and have had the true spirit of prayer in exercise in their asking it of God: But they have concluded more from these premises than is a just consequence from them. That they have thus prayed is a sure sign that their prayer is accepted and heard, and that God will give a gracious answer according to his own wisdom, and that the particular thing asked shall be given, or that which is equivalent; this is a just consequence from it.—But it is not inferred by any new revelation now made, but by the promises made to the prayer of faith in the holy scriptures. But that God will answer them in that individual thing they ask, if it be not a thing promised in God's word, or they do not certainly know that it is what will be most for the good of God's church, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom and glory, nor whether it will be best for them, is more than can be justly concluded from it. If God remarkably meets with one of his children while he is praying for a particular mercy of great importance, for himself or some other person, or any society of men, and does by the influences of his spirit greatly humble him, and empty him of himself in his prayer and manifests himself remarkably in his excellency, sovereignty and all-sufficient power and grace in Jesus Christ—and in a remarkable manner enables the person to come to him for that mercy, poor in spirit, and with humble resignation to God, and with

a great degree of faith in the divine sufficiency, and the sufficiency of Christ's mediation—that person has indeed a great deal the more reason to hope that God will grant that mercy, than otherwise he would have. The greater probability is justly inferred, agreeable to the Promises of the holy scripture, in that such prayer is accepted and heard; and it is much more probable that a prayer that is heard will be returned with a particular mercy that is asked, than one that is not so. And there is no reason at all to doubt, but that God sometimes especially enables to the exercises of faith, when the minds of his saints are engaged in thoughts of, and prayer for, some particular blessing they greatly desire; *i. e.* God is pleased especially to give them a believing frame, a sense of his fulness, and a spirit of humble dependance on him, at such times. When they are thinking of and praying for such mercy, he gives them a particular sense of his ability, and of the sufficiency of his power to overcome obstacles, and the sufficiency of his mercy and of the blood of Christ for the removal of the guilt that is in the way of the bestowment of such a mercy, in particular. When this is the case, it makes the probability still much greater, that God intends to bestow the particular mercy sought, in his own time, and his own way. But here is nothing of the nature of a revelation in the case, but only a drawing rational conclusions from the particular manner and circumstances of the ordinary gracious influences of God's Spirit. And as God is pleased sometimes to give his saints particular exercises of faith in his sufficiency, with regard to particular mercies; so he is sometimes pleased to make use of his word in order to it, and helps the actings of faith with respect to such a mercy. The strengthening of their faith in God's sufficiency, in this case, is therefore a just improvement of such scriptures; it is no more than what those scriptures, as they stand in the Bible, hold forth. But to take them as new whispers or revelations from heaven, is not making a just improvement of them. If persons have thus a spirit of prayer remarkably given them, concerning a particular mercy, from time to time, so as evidently to be assisted to act faith in God, in that particular, in a very distinguishing manner; the argument in some cases may be very strong, that God does design to grant that mercy, not from any revelation now made of it, but from such a kind and manner of the ordinary influence of his spirit with respect to that thing.

But here a great deal of caution and circumspection must be used in drawing inferences of this nature. There are many

ways by which persons may be misled and deluded. The ground on which some expect that they shall receive the thing they have asked for, is rather a strong imagination, than any true humble faith in the Divine sufficiency. They have a strong persuasion that the thing asked shall be granted (which they can give no reason for) without any remarkable discovery of that glory and fulness of God and Christ, that is the ground of faith. And sometimes the confidence that their prayers shall be answered, is only a self-righteous confidence, and no true faith. They have a high conceit of themselves as eminent saints, and special favourites of God, and have also a high conceit of the prayers they have made, because they were much enlarged and affected in them; and hence they are positive in it, that the thing will come to pass. And sometimes, when once they have conceived such a notion, they grow stronger and stronger in it; and this they think is from an immediate Divine hand upon their minds to strengthen their confidence; whereas it is only by their dwelling in their minds on their own excellency, and high experiences, and great assistances, whereby they look brighter and brighter in their own eyes. Hence it is found by observation and experience, that nothing in the world exposes so much to enthusiasm as spiritual pride and self-righteousness.

In order to drawing a just inference from the supposed assistance we have had in prayer for a particular mercy, and judging of the probability of the bestowment of that individual mercy, many things must be considered. We must consider the importance of the mercy sought, and the principle whence we so earnestly desire it; how far it is good, and agreeable to the mind and will of God; the degree of love to God that we exercised in our prayer; the degree of discovery that is made of the Divine sufficiency, and the degree in which our assistance is manifestly distinguishing with respect to that mercy.—And there is nothing of greater importance in the argument than the degree of humility, poverty of spirit, self-emptiness and resignation to the holy will of God, exercised in seeking that mercy. Praying for a particular mercy with much of these things, I have often seen blessed with a remarkable bestowment of the particular thing asked for. From what has been said, we may see which way God may, only by the ordinary gracious influences of his spirit, sometimes give his saints special reason to hope for the bestowment of a particular mercy they prayed for, and which we may suppose he oftentimes gives eminent saints, who have great degrees of humility, and much

communion with God. And here, I humbly conceive, some eminent servants of Jesus Christ that we read of in ecclesiastical story, have been led into a mistake; and, through want of distinguishing such things as these from immediate revelations, have thought that God has favoured them, in some instances, with the same kind of Divine influences that the apostles and prophets had of old.

Another erroneous principle that some have embraced, and which has been a source of many errors in their conduct, is, That persons ought always to do whatsoever the Spirit of God (though but indirectly) inclines them to. Indeed the Spirit of God in itself infinitely perfect, and all his immediate actings, simply considered, are perfect, and there can be nothing wrong in them; and therefore all that the Spirit of God inclines us to directly and immediately, without the intervention of any other cause that shall pervert and misimprove what is from him ought to be done. But there may be many things, disposition to do which may indirectly be from the spirit of God, that we ought not to do. The disposition in general may be good, and from the spirit of God; but the particular determination of that disposition, as to particular actions, objects and circumstances, may be from the intervention or interposition of some infirmity, blindness, inadvertence, deceit or corruption of ours. So that although the disposition in general ought to be allowed and promoted, and all those actings of it that are simply from God's spirit, yet the particular ill direction or determination of that disposition, which is from some other cause, ought not to be followed.

As for instance, the spirit of God may cause a person to have a dear love to another, and so a great desire of and delight in his comfort, ease and pleasure. This disposition in general is good, and ought to be followed; but yet through the intervention of indiscretion, or some other bad cause, it may be ill directed, and have a bad determination, as to particular acts; and the person indirectly, through that real love he has to his neighbour, may kill him with kindness; he may do that out of sincere good-will to him, which may tend to ruin him.—A good disposition may through some inadvertence or delusion, strongly incline a person to that which, if he saw all things as they are, would be most contrary to that disposition. The true loyalty of a general, and his zeal for the honour of his Prince, may exceedingly animate him in war; but this good disposition, through indiscretion and mistake, may push him forward to those things that give the enemy great advantage, and may ex-

pose him and his army to ruin, and may tend to the ruin of his master's interest.

The apostle does evidently suppose that the spirit of God, in his extraordinary, immediate and miraculous influences on men's minds, may in some respect excite inclinations, which, if gratified, would tend to confusion, and therefore must sometimes be restrained, and in their exercise must be under the government of discretion; 1 *Cor.* xiv. 31—33. *For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.* Here by *the spirits of the prophets*, according to the known phraseology of the apostle, is meant the spirit of God acting in the prophets, according to those special gifts with which each one was endued: And here it is plainly implied that the spirit of God, thus operating in them, may be an occasion of their having sometimes an inclination to do that, in the exercise of those gifts, which it was not proper, decent or profitable that they should; and that therefore the inclination, though indirectly from the spirit of God, should be restrained; and that it ought to be subject to the discretion of the prophets, as to the particular time and circumstances of its exercise.

I make no doubt but that it is possible for a minister to have by the spirit of God such a sense of the importance of eternal things, and of the misery of mankind—so many of whom are exposed to eternal destruction—together with such a love to souls, that he might find in himself a disposition to spend all his time, day and night, in warning, exhorting and calling upon men; and so that he must be obliged as it were to do violence to himself ever to refrain, so as to give himself any opportunity to eat, drink or sleep. And so I believe there may be a disposition, in like manner, indirectly excited in lay-persons, through the intervention of their infirmity, to do what only belongs to ministers; yea, to do those things that would not become either ministers or people. Through the influence of the spirit of God, together with want of discretion, and some remaining corruption, women and children might feel themselves inclined to break forth aloud to great congregations, warning and exhorting the whole multitude; and to scream in the streets, or to leave their families, and go from house to house, earnestly exhorting others; but yet it would by no means follow that it was their duty to do these things, or that they would not have a tendency to do ten times as much hurt as good.

Another wrong principle, from whence have arisen errors in conduct, is, that whatsoever is found to be of present and immediate benefit may and ought to be practised, without looking forward to future consequences. Some persons seem to think that it sufficiently justifies any thing they say or do, that it is found to be for present edification; it assists and promotes their present affection, and therefore they think they should not concern themselves about future consequences, but leave them with God. Indeed in things that are in themselves our duty, being required by moral rules, or absolute positive commands of God, they must be done, and future consequences must be left with God; our discretion takes no place here: but in other things we are to be governed by discretion, and must not only look at the present good, but our view must be extensive, and we must look at the consequences of things. It is the duty of ministers especially to exercise this discretion. In things wherein they are not determined by an absolute rule, and not enjoined them by a wisdom superior to their own, Christ has left them to their own discretion, with that general rule, that they should exercise the utmost wisdom they can obtain, in pursuing that which, upon the best view of the consequences of things, will tend most to the advancement of his kingdom. This is implied in those words of Christ to his disciples, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel, *Mat.* x. 16. *Be ye wise as serpents.*

The scripture always represents the work of a gospel-minister by those employments that especially require a wise foresight of, and provision for future events and consequences. So it is compared to the business of a steward, which in an eminent manner requires forecast; as, for instance, a wise laying in of provision for the supply of the needs of the family, according to its future necessities. So it is compared to the business of a husbandman, that almost wholly consists in things done with a view to the future fruits and consequences of his labour. The husbandman's discretion and forecast is eloquently set forth in Isa. xxviii. 24, 25, 26. *Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.* So the work of the ministry is compared to that of a wise builder or architect, who has a comprehensive view; and for whom it is necessary, that, when he begins a building, he should

have at once a view of the whole frame, and all the future parts of the structure, even to the pinnacle, that all may be fitly framed together. So also it is compared to the business of a trader or merchant, who is to gain by trading; a business that exceedingly requires forecast, and without which it is never like to be followed with success for any long time. So it is represented by the business of a fisherman, which depends on peculiar skill; and to that of a soldier, which perhaps, above any other secular business, requires great foresight, and a wise provision for future events and consequences.

And particularly, ministers ought not to be careless how much they discompose the minds of natural men, or how great an uproar they raise in the carnal world, and so lay blocks in the way of the propagation of religion. This certainly is not to follow the example of the zealous apostle *Paul*, who though he would not depart from his duty to please carnal men, yet, wherein he might with a good conscience, exceedingly laid out himself to please them. He avoided raising in the multitude, prejudices, oppositions and tumults against the gospel; and looked upon it as of great consequence. 1 Cor. x. 32, 33. *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.* Yea, he declares that he laid himself out so much for this, that he made himself a kind of a servant to all sorts of men, conforming to their customs and various humours in every thing wherein he might, even in things that were very burdensome to him, that he might not fright men away from Christianity, and cause them to stand as it were braced and armed against it, but on the contrary, if possible, might with condescension and friendship win and draw them to it; 1 Cor. ix. 19—23. And agreeable hereto are the directions he gives to others, both ministers and people: So he directs the Christian *Romans, not to please themselves, but every one please his neighbour, for his good, to edification*, Rom. xv. 1, 2. and to *follow after the things that make for peace*, chap. xiv. 19. And he expresses it in terms exceeding strong, Rom. xii. 18. *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* And he directs ministers to endeavour, if possible, to gain opposers by a meek, condescending treatment, avoiding all appearance of strife or fierceness, 2 Tim. ii. 24—26. To the like purpose, the same apostle directs Christians to *walk in wisdom towards them that are without*, Eph. iv. 5. and to avoid

giving offence to others, if we can, *that our good may not be evil spoken of*, Rom. xiv. 16. So that it is evident, the most zealous and most successful propagator of vital religion that ever was, looked upon it to be of great consequence to endeavour, as much as possible, by all the methods of lawful meekness and gentleness, to avoid raising the prejudice and opposition of the world against religion.—When we have done our utmost, there will be opposition enough to vital religion, against which the carnal mind of man has such an enmity. We should not therefore needlessly increase and raise that enmity. The apostle, though he took so much pains to please men, had persecution almost every where raised against him. A fisherman is careful not needlessly to ruffle and disturb the water, lest he should drive the fish away from his net; but he will rather endeavour if possible to draw them into it. Such a fisherman was the apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 15, 16. *And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. But be it so, I did not burden you, nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.*

The necessity of suffering persecution, in order to being a true Christian, has undoubtedly by some been carried to an extreme, and the doctrine has been abused. It has been looked upon as necessary to uphold a man's credit amongst others as a Christian, that he should be persecuted. I have heard it made an objection against the sincerity of particular persons, that they were no more hated and reproached. And the manner of glorying in persecution, or the cross of Christ, has in some been very wrong, bearing too much the appearance of lifting up themselves in it, that they were very much hated and reviled, more than most, as an evidence of their excelling others, in being good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Such an improvement of the doctrine of the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and of the necessity of persecution, becoming credible and customary, has a direct tendency to cause those that would be accounted true Christians, to behave themselves so towards those that are not well-affected to religion, as to provoke their hatred, or at least to be but little careful to avoid it, and not very studiously and earnestly to strive (after the apostle's example and precepts) to please them to their edification, and by meekness and gentleness to win them, and by all possible means to live peaceably with them.

I believe that saying of our Saviour, *I came not to send peace on earth, but division*, has been abused; as though when

we see great strife arise about religion, violent heats of spirit against the truly pious, and a loud clamour and uproar against the work of God, it was to be rejoiced in, because it is that which Christ came to send. It has almost been laid down as a maxim by some, That the more division and strife, the better sign; which naturally leads persons to seek and provoke it, or leads them to such a manner of behaviour, such a roughness and sharpness, or such an affected neglect, as has a natural tendency to raise prejudice and opposition; instead of striving as the apostle did to his utmost, by all meekness, gentleness, and benevolence of behaviour, to prevent or assuage it.—Christ came to send a sword on earth, and to cause division, no otherwise than he came to send damnation; for Christ, that is set for the glorious restoration of some, is set for the fall of others, and to be a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to them, and an occasion of their vastly more aggravated and terrible ruin. And this is always the consequence of a great revival of vital religion; it is the means of the salvation of some, and the more aggravated damnation of others. But certainly this is no just argument that men's exposedness to damnation is not to be lamented, or that we should not exert ourselves to our utmost, in all the methods that we can devise, that others might be saved, and to avoid all such behaviour towards them as tends to lead them down to hell.

I know there is naturally a great enmity in the heart of man against vital religion; and I believe there would have been a great deal of opposition against this glorious work of God in *New-England*, if the subjects and promoters of it had behaved themselves never so agreeably to Christian rules; and I believe if this work goes on and spreads much in the world, so as to begin to shake kingdoms and nations, it will dreadfully stir up the rage of earth and hell, and will put the world into the greatest uproar that ever it was in since it stood. I believe Satan's dying struggles will be the most violent; but yet a great deal might be done to restrain this opposition, by a good conformity to that of the apostle, Jam. iii. 13. *Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.* And I also believe that if the rules of Christian charity, meekness, gentleness and prudence had been duly observed by the generality of the zealous promoters of this work, it would have made three times the progress that it has; *i. e.* if it had pleased God in such a case to give a blessing to means in proportion as he has done.

Under this head of carelessness about future consequences,

it may be proper to say something of introducing things new and strange, and that have a tendency by their novelty to shock and surprise people. Nothing can be more evident from the New Testament, than that such things ought to be done with great caution and moderation, to avoid the offence that may be thereby given, and the prejudices that might be raised, to clog and hinder the progress of religion. Yea, it ought to be thus in things that are in themselves good and excellent, and of great weight, provided they are not things of absolute duty, which though they may appear to be innovations, yet cannot be neglected without immorality or disobedience to the commands of God. What great caution and moderation did the apostles use in introducing things that were new, and abolishing things that were old in their day? How gradually were the ceremonial performances of the law of *Moses* removed and abolished among the Christian *Jews?* and how long did even the apostle *Paul* himself conform to those ceremonies which he calls weak and beggarly elements? yea even to the rite of circumcision, (*Acts* xvi. 3.) that he might not prejudice the *Jews* against Christianity? So it seems to have been very gradually that the *Jewish* sabbath was abolished, and the Christian sabbath introduced, for the same reason. And the apostles avoided teaching Christians in those early days, at least for a great while, some high and excellent divine truths, because they could not bear them yet, 1 *Cor.* iii. 1, 2. *Heb.* v. 11. to the end. Thus strictly did the apostles observe the rule that their blessed master gave them, of not putting new wine into old bottles, lest they should burst the bottles, and lose the wine. And how did Christ himself, while on earth, forbear so plainly to teach his disciples the great doctrines of Christianity, concerning his satisfaction, and the nature and manner of a sinner's justification and reconciliation with God, and the particular benefits of his death, resurrection and ascension? because, in that infant state of the disciples, their minds were not prepared for such instructions; and therefore the more clear and full revelation of these things was reserved for the time when their minds should be further enlightened and strengthened by the outpouring of the spirit after his ascension; *John* xvi. 12, 13. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* And *Mark* iv. 33. *And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to bear it.*—These things might be enough to convince any one, that does not think himself wiser than Christ and his apostles, that great prudence and caution should be used in

introducing things into the church of God, that are very uncommon, though in themselves excellent, lest by our rashness and imprudent haste we hinder religion much more than we help it.

Persons influenced by indiscreet zeal are always in too much haste; they are impatient of delays, and therefore are for jumping to the uppermost step first, before they have taken the preceding steps; whereby they expose themselves to fall and break their bones. They are delighted to see the building rise, and all their endeavour and strength is employed in advancing its height, without taking care proportionably of the bottom; whereby the whole is in danger of coming to the ground. Or they are for putting on the cupola and pinnacle before the lower parts of the building are done; which tends at once to put a stop to the building, and hinder its ever being a complete structure. Many that are thus imprudent and hasty with their zeal, have a real eager appetite for that which is good; but like children, are impatient to wait for the fruit, and therefore snatch it before it is ripe. Oftentimes in their haste they overshoot their mark, and frustrate their own end; they put that which they would obtain further out of reach than it was before, and establish and confirm that which they would remove. Things must have time to ripen. The prudent husbandman waits till the harvest is ripe, before he reaps. We are now just beginning to recover out of a dreadful disease; but to feed a man recovering from a fever with strong meat at once, is the ready way to kill him. The reformation from popery was much hindered by this hasty zeal. Many were for immediately rectifying all disorders by force, which was condemned by *Luther*, and was a great trouble to him. See *Sleiden's* Hist. of the reformation, p. 52, *&c.* and book v. throughout. It is a vain prejudice that some have lately imbibed against such rules of prudence and moderation; but they will be forced to come to them at last; they will find themselves unable to maintain their cause without them; and, if they will not hearken before, experience will convince them at last, when it will be too late for them to rectify their mistake.

Another error, arising from an erroneous principle, is a wrong notion that they have an attestation of divine providence to persons, or things. We go too far, when we look upon the success that God gives to some persons, in making them the instruments of doing much good, as a testimony of God's approbation of those persons and all the courses they take. It has been a main argument to defend the conduct of some ministers,

who have been blamed as imprudent and irregular, that God has blessed them, and given them great success; and that however men charge them as guilty of wrong things, yet that God is with them, and then who can be against them? And probably some of those ministers themselves, by this very means, have had their ears stopt against all that has been said to convince them of their misconduct. But there are innumerable ways by which persons may be misled, in forming a judgment of the mind and will of God, from the events of providence. If a person's success be a reward of something in him that God approves, yet it is no argument that he approves of every thing in him. Who can tell how far the divine grace may go in greatly rewarding some small good in a person, a good meaning, something good in his disposition; while he at the same time, in sovereign mercy, hides his eyes from a great deal that is bad, which it is his pleasure to forgive, and not to mark against the person, though in itself it be very ill? God has not told us after what manner he will proceed in this matter, and we go upon most uncertain grounds when we undertake to determine. It is an exceeding difficult thing to know how far love or hatred are exercised towards persons or actions by all that is before us. God was pleased in his sovereignty to give such success to *Jacob* in that which, from beginning to end, was a deceitful, lying contrivance and proceeding of his. In that way he obtained a blessing that was worth infinitely more than the fatness of the Earth and the dew of Heaven, given to *Esau* in his blessing; yea, worth more than all that the world can afford. God was for a while with *Judas*, so that by God's power accompanying him, he wrought miracles and cast out devils; but this could not justly be interpreted as God's approbation of his person, or the thievery in which he lived at the same time.

The dispensations and events of providence, with their reasons, are too little understood by us, to be as our rule, instead of God's word; *God has his way in the sea, and his path in the mighty waters, and his footsteps are not known, and he gives us no account of any of his matters.* And therefore we cannot safely take the events of his providence as a revelation of his mind concerning a person's conduct and behaviour; we have no warrant so to do. God has never appointed those things to be our rule. We have but one rule to go by, and that is his holy word; and when we join any thing else with it, as having the force of a rule, we are guilty of that which is strictly forbidden, *Deut.* iv. 2. *Prov.* xxx. 6. & *Rev.* xxii. 18. They who make what they imagine is pointed forth to them in providence, the rule of

behaviour, do err, as well as those that follow impulses and impressions. We should put nothing in the room of the word of God. It is to be feared that some have been greatly confirmed and imboldened, by the great success that God has given them, in some things that have really been contrary to the rules of God's holy word. If so, they have been guilty of presumption, and abusing God's kindness to them, and the great honour he has put upon them. They have seen that God was with them, and made them victorious in their preaching; and this, it is to be feared, has been abused by some to a degree of self-confidence. This has much taken off all jealousy of themselves; they have been bold therefore to go great lengths, in a presumption that God was with them, and would defend them, and finally baffle all that found fault with them.

Indeed there is a voice of God in his providence, that may be interpreted and well understood by the rule of his word; and providence may, to our dark minds and weak faith, confirm the word of God, as it fulfils it. But to *improve* divine providence thus, is quite a different thing from making a *rule* of providence. Good use may be made of the events of providence, of our own observation and experience, and human Histories, and the opinion of eminent men; but finally all must be brought to *one rule, viz.* the word of God, and that must be regarded as our *only rule.*

Nor do I think that they go upon sure ground, who conclude they have not been in an error in their conduct, because at the time of their doing a thing for which they have been blamed and reproached by others, they were favoured with special comforts of God's spirit. God's bestowing special spiritual mercies on a person, is no sign that he approves of every thing he sees in him at that time. *David* had the presence of God while he lived in Polygamy; and *Solomon* had some very high favours, and peculiar smiles of Heaven, and particularly at the dedication of the temple, while he greatly multiplied wives to himself, and horses, and silver and gold; all contrary to the most express command of God to the King, in the law of *Moses*, Deut. xvii. 16, 17. We cannot tell how far God may hide his eyes from beholding iniquity in *Jacob*, and seeing perverseness in *Israel*. We cannot tell what are the reasons of God's actions any further than he interprets for himself. God sometimes gave some of the primitive Christians the extraordinary influence of his spirit when they were out of the way of their duty, and even while they were abusing it; as is plainly implied, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 31, 33.—Suppose a person has done a thing

for which he is reproached, and that reproach be an occasion of his feeling sweet exercises of grace in his soul, I do not think that a certain evidence that God approves of the thing he is blamed for: for undoubtedly a mistake may be the occasion of stirring up the exercise of Grace. If a person, through mistake, thinks he has received some particular great mercy, that mistake may be the occasion of stirring up the sweet exercises of love, and true thankfulness to God. Suppose one that is full of love to God should hear what he deems credible tidings, concerning a remarkable deliverance of a child or a dear friend, or of some glorious thing done for the city of God; no wonder if, on such an occasion, the sweet actings of love to God, and delight in God, should be excited, though indeed afterwards it should prove a false report that he heard. So, if one that loves God is much maligned and reproached for doing what he thinks God required and approves, no wonder that it is sweet to such an one to think that God is his friend, though men are his enemies; no wonder at all, that this is an occasion of his betaking himself to God as his sure friend, and find sweet complacence in him; though he be indeed in a mistake concerning that which he thought was agreeable to God's will. As I have before shewn that the exercise of a truly good affection may be the occasion of error, and may indirectly incline a person to do that which is wrong; so, on the other hand, error, or a doing that which is wrong, may be an occasion of the exercise of a truly good affection. The reason of it is this, that however all exercises of grace be from the spirit of God, yet he dwells and acts in the hearts of the saints, in some measure, after the manner of a vital, natural principle, a principle of new nature in them; whose exercises are excited by means, in some measure, as other natural principles are. Though grace is not in the saints as a *mere natural principle*, but as a sovereign agent, and so its exercises are not *tied to means*, by an immutable law of nature, as in mere natural principles; yet God has so constituted, that grace should dwell so in the hearts of the saints, that its exercises should have some degree of connection with means, after the manner of a principle of nature.

Another erroneous principle that has been an occasion of some mischief and confusion, is, That external order in matters of religion, and use of the means of grace, is but little to be regarded. It has been spoken lightly of, under the names of ceremonies and dead forms, &c. and is probably the more despised by some, because their opposers insist so much upon it, and because they are so continually hearing from them the cry

of *disorder and confusion.*——It is objected against the importance of external order, That God does not look at the outward form, he looks at the heart. But that is a weak argument against its importance, that true godliness does not consist in it; for it may be equally made use of against all the outward means of grace whatsoever. True godliness does not consist in ink and paper, but yet that would be a foolish objection against the importance of ink and paper in religion, when without it we could not have the word of God. If any external means at all are needful, any outward actions of a public nature, or wherein God's people are jointly concerned in public society, without doubt external order is needful. The management of an external affair that is public, or wherein a multitude is concerned, without order, is in every thing found impossible.—Without order there can be no general direction of a multitude to any particular designed end, their purposes will cross and hinder one another. A multitude cannot act in union one with another without order; confusion separates and divides them, so that there can be no concert or agreement. If a multitude would help one another in any affair, they must unite themselves one to another in a regular subordination of members, in some measure as it is in the natural body; by this means they will be in some capacity to act with united strength. And thus Christ has appointed that it should be in the visible church, as 1 Cor. xii. 14, &c. and Rom. xii. 4—8. Zeal without order will do but little, or at least it will be effectual but a little while. Let a company, however zealous against the enemy, go forth to war without any order, every one rushing forward as his zeal shall drive him, all in confusion; if they gain something at first onset, by surprising the enemy, yet how soon do they come to nothing, and fall an easy helpless prey to their adversaries? Order is one of the most necessary of all external means of the spiritual good of God's church; and therefore it is requisite even in heaven itself, where there is the least need of any external means of grace. Order is maintained amongst the glorious angels there. And the necessity of it for carrying on any design, wherein a multitude are concerned, is so great that even the devils in hell are driven to something of it, that they may carry on the designs of their kingdom. And it is very observable, that those irrational creatures for whom it is needful that they should act in union, and join as a multitude together to carry on any work for their preservation—by a wonderful instinct that God has put into them—observe and

maintain a most regular and exact order among themselves; such as bees and some others. And order in the visible church is not only necessary for carrying on the designs of Christ's glory and the church's prosperity, but it is absolutely necessary to its defence; without it, it is like a city without walls, and can be in no capacity to defend itself from any kind of mischief. And so, however it be an external thing, yet is not to be despised on that account; for though it be not the food of souls, yet it is in some respect their defence. The people of *Holland* would be very foolish to despise the dikes that keep out the sea from overwhelming them, under the names of dead stones and vile earth, because the matter of which they are built is not good to eat. It seems to be partly on this foundation that some have seemed to act on that principle, That the power of judging and openly censuring others should not be reserved in the hands of particular persons, or consistories appointed thereto, but ought to be left at large, for any body that pleases to take it upon them, or that think themselves fit for it. But more of this afterwards.

On this foundation also, an orderly attending on the stated worship of God in families, has been made too light of; and it has been in some places too much a common and customary thing to be absent from family-worship, and to be abroad late in the night at religious meetings, or to attend religious conversation. Not but that this may be done on certain extraordinary occasions; I have seen the case to be such in many instances, that I have thought did afford sufficient warrant for persons to be absent from family-prayer, and to be from home till very late in the night. But we should take heed that it do not become a custom or common practice; if so, we shall soon find the consequences to be very ill. It seems to be on the same foundation—the supposed unprofitableness of external order—that it has been thought by some, there is no need of religious services and performances being limited to any certain office in the church; (of which more afterwards.) And also, that those officers themselves, particularly that of the gospel-ministry, need not be limited, as it used to be, to persons of a liberal education; but some of late have been for having others, whom they have supposed to be persons of eminent experience, publicly licensed to preach, yea and ordained to the work of the ministry; and some ministers have seemed to favour such a thing. But how little do they seem to look forward, and consider the unavoidable consequences of opening such a door? If once it should become a custom, or a thing

generally approved and allowed of, to admit uneducated persons to the work of the ministry, because of their remarkable experiences, and good understanding, how many lay-persons would soon appear as candidates for the work of the ministry? I doubt not but that I have been acquainted with scores that would have desired it. And how shall we know where to stop? If one is admitted because his experiences are remarkable, another will think his experiences also remarkable; and we perhaps shall not be able to deny but that they are near as great. If one is admitted because, besides experiences, he has good natural abilities, another by himself, and many of his neighbours, may be thought equal to him. It will be found of absolute necessity that there should be some certain, visible limits fixed, to avoid bringing odium upon ourselves, and breeding uneasiness and strife amongst others; and I know of none better, and indeed no other that can well be fixed, than what the prophet *Zechariah* fixes, viz. That those only should be appointed to be pastors or shepherds in God's church, that *have been taught to keep cattle from their youth*, or that have had an education for that purpose. Those ministers who would break over these limits, and make a practice of it, would break down that fence which they themselves, after they have been wearied with the ill consequences, would be glad to have somebody else build up for them. Not but that there may probably be some persons in the land, who have had no education at college, that are in themselves better qualified for the work of the ministry, than some others who have taken their degrees, and are now ordained. But yet I believe the breaking over those bounds which have hitherto been set, in ordaining such persons, would in its consequences be a greater calamity than the missing such persons in the work of the ministry. Opening a door for the admission of unlearned men to the work of the ministry, though they should be persons of extraordinary experience, would on some accounts be especially prejudicial at such a day as this; because such persons, for want of extensive knowledge, are oftentimes forward to lead others into those things which a people are in danger of at such a time, above all others; viz. impulses, vain imaginations, superstition, indiscreet zeal, and such like extremes.

Another erroneous principle that some have been, at least, in danger of, is, that ministers, because they speak as Christ's Ambassadors, may assume the same style, and speak as with the same authority that the prophets of old did, yea that Jesus Christ himself did in the 23d of *Matthew, Ye Serpents, ye gene-*

ration of Vipers, &c.; and that not only when they are speaking to the people, but also to their brethren in the ministry. The principle is absurd, because it makes no difference in the degrees and orders of messengers, though God has made a very great difference; for though they all come in some respect in the name of God, and with something of his authority, yet certainly there is a vast difference in the *degree* of authority with which God has invested them. Jesus Christ was sent into the world as God's messenger, and so was one of his apostles; and so also is an ordinary pastor of a church: but yet it does not follow, that because Jesus Christ and an ordinary minister are both messengers of God, that therefore an ordinary minister, in his office, is vested with an equal degree of authority, that Christ was in his. As there is a great difference in their authority, and as Christ came as God's messenger in a vastly higher manner, so another style became him, more authoritative than is proper for us worms of the dust, though we also are messengers of inferior degree. It would be strange if God, when he has made so great a difference in the degree in which he has invested different messengers with his authority, should make no difference as to the outward appearance and shew of authority. Though God has put great honour upon ministers, and they may speak as his Ambassadors, yet he never intended that they should have the same outward appearance of authority and majesty, either in their behaviour or speech, as his Son shall have, when he comes to judgment at the last day; though both come in the name of the Lord. Alas! can it enter into the hearts of worms of the dust, that it is fit and suitable it should be so?

SECT. III.

A third cause of errors in conduct, is, being ignorant or unobservant of some things, by which the devil has special advantage.

And here I would particularly notice some things with respect to the *inward experiences* of Christians themselves. And something with regard to the *external effects* of experiences.

I. *Inward experiences.* There are *three* things I would notice with regard to the *experiences* of Christians, by which the devil has many advantages against us.

1. The first thing is the *mixture* there oftentimes is in the experiences of true Christians; whereby when they have truly

gracious experiences, and divine and spiritual discoveries and exercises, they have something else mixed with them, besides what is spiritual. There is a mixture of that which is natural, and that which is corrupt, with that which is divine. The great imperfection of grace, the feebleness and infancy of the new nature, and the great remains of corruption, together with our circumstances in this world, where we are encompassed with what tends to pollute us, expose to this. And indeed it is not to be supposed that Christians ever have any experiences in this world that are wholly pure, entirely spiritual, without any mixture of what is natural and carnal. The beam of light, as it comes from the fountain of light upon our hearts, is pure; but, as it is reflected thence, it is mixt. The seed as sent from heaven, and planted in the heart, is pure; but, as it springs up out of the heart, is impure: yea, there is commonly a much greater mixture than persons for the most part seem to imagine. I have often thought that the experiences of true christians are very frequently as it is with some sorts of fruits, which are enveloped in several coverings of thick shells or pods, that are thrown away by him that gathers the fruit, and but a very small part of the whole bulk is the pure kernel that is good to eat.

The things, of all which there is frequently some mixture with gracious experiences, yea with very great and high experiences, are these three; *human or natural affection and passions; impressions on the imagination;* and a degree of *self-righteousness* or *spiritual pride.* There is very often with that which is spiritual a great mixture of that affection or passion which arises from natural principles; so that nature has a very great hand in those vehement motions and flights of the *passions* that appear. Hence the same degrees of divine communications from heaven shall have vastly different effects, in what outwardly appears, in persons of different natural tempers. The great mixture of that which is natural with that which is spiritual, is very manifest in the peculiar effects that divine influences have in some certain families, or persons of such a blood, in distinguishing the operations of the passions and affections, and the manner of their outward expressions. I know some remarkable instances of this. The same is also evident by the different effects of divine communications on the same person at different times, and in different circumstances. The novelty of things, or the sudden transition from an opposite extreme, and many other things that might be mentioned, greatly contribute to the raising of the passions.

And sometimes there is not only a mixture of that which is common and natural with gracious experience, but even that which is animal, what is in a great measure from the body, and is properly the result of the animal frame. In what true christians feel of affections towards God, all is not always purely holy and divine; every thing that is felt in the affections does not arise from spiritual principles, but common and natural principles have a very great hand; an improper self-love may have a great share in the effect: God is not loved for his own sake, or for the excellency and beauty of his own perfections, as he ought to be; nor have these things in any wise that proportion in the effect that they ought to have. So, in the love true Christians have one to another, very often there is a great mixture of what arises from common and natural principles, with grace. Self-love has a great hand; the children of God are not loved purely for Christ's sake, but there may be a great mixture of that natural love which many sects of heretics have boasted of, who have been greatly united one to another, because they were of their company, on their side, against the rest of the world; yea, there may be a mixture of natural love to the opposite sex, with Christian and divine love. So there may be a great mixture in that sorrow for sin which the godly have, and also in their joys; natural principles may greatly contribute to what is felt, a great many ways, as might easily be shown. There is nothing that belongs to Christian experience more liable to a corrupt mixture than zeal. Though it be an excellent virtue, a heavenly flame, when it is pure; yet as it is exercised in those who are so little sanctified, and so little humbled, as we are in the present state, it is very apt to be mixed with human passion, yea with corrupt, hateful affections, pride and uncharitable bitterness, and other things that are not from heaven, but from hell.

Another thing often mixed with what is spiritual in the experiences of Christians are impressions on the *imagination*; whereby godly persons, together with a spiritual understanding of divine things, and conviction of their reality and certainty, and a deep sense of their excellency or great importance upon their hearts, have strongly impressed on their minds external ideas or images of things. A degree of imagination in such a case, is unavoidable, and necessarily arises from human nature, as constituted in the present state; and often is of great benefit; but, when it is in too great a degree, it becomes an impure mixture that is prejudicial. This mixture very often arises from the constitution of the body. It commonly greatly con-

tributes to the other kind of mixture mentioned before, *viz.* of natural affections and passions; it helps to raise them to a great height.

Another thing that is often mixed with the experiences of true Christians, which is the worst mixture of all, is a degree of self-righteousness or spiritual pride. This is often mixed with the joys of Christians. Their joy is not purely the joy of faith, or a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, but is partly a rejoicing in themselves. There is oftentimes in their elevations a looking upon themselves, and a viewing their own high attainments; they rejoice partly because they are taken with their own experiences and great discoveries, which makes them in their own apprehensions so to excel; and this heightens all their passions, and especially those effects that are more external. There is a much greater mixture of these things in the experiences of some Christians than others; in some the mixture is so great, as very much to obscure and hide the beauty of grace in them, like a thick smoke that hinders all the shining of the fire.

These things we ought to be well aware of, that we may not take all for gold that glisters, and that we may know what to countenance and encourage, and what to discourage; otherwise Satan will have a vast advantage against us, for he works in the corrupt mixture. Sometimes, for want of persons distinguishing the ore from the pure metal, those experiences are most admired by the persons themselves and by others, that are not the most excellent. The great external effects, and vehemence of the passions, and violent agitations of the animal spirits, is sometimes much owing to the corrupt mixture (as is very apparent in some instances) though it be not always so. I have observed a great difference among those of high affections, and seem disposed to be earnestly talking to those about them. Some insist much more, in their talk, on what they behold in God and Christ, the glory of the divine perfections, Christ's beauty and excellency, and wonderful condescension and grace, and their own unworthiness, and the great and infinite obligations that they themselves and others are under to love and serve God; others insist almost wholly on their own high privileges, their assurance of God's love and favour, and the weakness and wickedness of opposers, and how much they are above their reach. The latter may have much of the presence of God, but their experiences do not appear to be so solid and unmixed as the former. And there is a great deal of difference in persons' earnestness in their talk and behaviour.

In some it seems to come from the fulness of their hearts, and from the great sense they have of truth. They have a deep sense of the certainty and infinite greatness, excellency and importance of divine and eternal things, attended with all appearances of great humility. In others their earnestness seems to arise from a great mixture of human passion, and an undue and intemperate agitation of the spirits, which appears by their earnestness and vehemence not being proportioned to the nature of the subject they insist on, but they are violent in every thing they say, as much when they are talking of things of smaller importance, as when speaking of things of greater weight. I have seen it thus in an instance or two, in which this vehemence at length issued in distraction. And there have been some few instances of a more extraordinary nature still, even of persons finding themselves disposed earnestly to talk and cry out, from an unaccountable kind of bodily pressure, without any extraordinary view of any thing in their minds, or sense of any thing upon their hearts; wherein probably there was the immediate hand of the devil.

2. Another thing, by which the devil has great advantage, is the unheeded *defects* there sometimes are in the experiences of true Christians, connected with those high affections wherein there is much that is truly good. I do not mean that defect or imperfection of degree which is in every holy disposition and exercise in this life, in the best of the saints; but I aim at experiences being especially defective in some particular thing that ought to be in them; which, though it be not an essential defect, or such as is in the experiences of hypocrites, which renders them utterly vain, monstrous, and altogether abominable to God, is such as maims and deforms the experience. The essence of truly Christian experiences is not wanting, but that is wanting which is very needful in order to the proper beauty of the image of Christ in such a person's experiences. Things are very much out of a due proportion; there is indeed much of some things, but at the same time there is so little of some other things that should bear a proportion, that the defect very much deforms the Christian, and is truly odious in the sight of God. What I observed before was something *too much*, something mixed, not belonging to the Christian as such; what I speak of now is something *not enough*, something wanting that does belong to the Christian as such. The one deforms the Christian as a monstrous excrescence; by the other the new creature is maimed, some member in a great measure is wanting, or so small and withering as to be very

much out of due proportion. This is another spiritual calamity that the saints are liable to through the great imperfection of grace in this life. Thus the chicken in the egg, in the beginning of its formation, has indeed the rudiments or lineaments of all the parts; yet some few parts only are plainly seen, when others are hid, so that without a microscope it appears very monstrous. When this deficiency and disproportion is great, as sometimes it is in real saints, it is not only a great deformity in itself, but has many ill consequences; it gives the devil great advantage, leaves a door open for corruption, exposes to very deformed and unlovely actions, and issues oftentimes in the great wounding of the soul.

For the better understanding of this matter, we may observe, that God, in the revelation that he has made of himself to the world by Jesus Christ, has taken care to give a proportionable manifestation of two kinds of excellencies or perfections of his nature, *viz.* those that especially tend to possess us with awe and reverence, and to search and humble us; and those that tend to win, to draw and encourage us. By *the one*, he appears as an infinitely great, pure, holy and heart-searching judge; by *the other*, as a gentle and gracious father and a loving friend. By the one, he is a pure, searching and burning flame; by the other, a sweet, refreshing light. These two kinds of attributes are as it were admirably tempered together in the revelation of the gospel. There is a proportionable manifestation of justice and mercy, holiness and grace, majesty and gentleness, authority and condescension. God hath thus ordered that his diverse excellencies, as he reveals himself in the face of Jesus Christ, should have a proportionable manifestation, herein providing for our necessities. He knew it to be of great consequence that our apprehensions of these diverse perfections of his nature should be duly proportioned one to another. A defect on the one hand, *viz.* having a discovery of his love and grace, without a proportionable discovery of his awful majesty, his holy and searching purity, would tend to spiritual pride, carnal confidence and presumption; and a defect on the other hand, *viz.* having a discovery of his holy majesty, without a proportionable discovery of his grace, tends to unbelief, a sinful fearfulness and spirit of bondage. And therefore herein chiefly consists that deficiency of experiences that I am now speaking of. The revelation God has made of himself in his word, and the provision made for our spiritual welfare in the gospel, is perfect; but the actual light and commu-

nications we have, are many ways exceeding imperfect and maimed. And experience plainly shews, that Christians may have high manifestations in some respects, and yet their circumstances may be unhappy in this regard, that their discoveries are no more general. There is a great difference among Christians in this respect; some have much more general discoveries than others, who are upon many accounts the most amiable Christians. Christians may have experiences that are very high, and yet there may be very much of this deficiency and disproportion. Their high experiences are truly from the Spirit of God, but sin comes in by the defect (as indeed all sin is originally from a defective privative cause) and in such a case high discoveries, at the same time that they are enjoyed, may be and sometimes are the occasion, or *causa sine qua non*, of sin. Sin may come in at that back door, the gap that is left open; as spiritual pride often does. And many times the Spirit of God is quenched by this means, and God punishes the pride and presumption that rises, by bringing such darkness, and suffering such awful consequences and horrid temptations, as are enough to make one's hair stand an end to hear them.—Christians therefore should diligently observe their own hearts as to this matter, and should pray to God that he would give them experiences in which one thing may bear a proportion to another, that God may be honoured and their souls edified thereby; and ministers should have an eye to this, in their private dealings with the souls of their people.

It is chiefly from such a defect of experiences that some things have arisen which have been pretty common among true Christians of late, though supposed by many to have risen from a good cause; as particularly talking of divine and heavenly things, and expressing divine joys with laughter or a light behaviour. I believe in many instances such things have arisen from a good cause, as their *causa sine qua non*. High discoveries and gracious joyful affections have been the *occasion* of them; but the proper *cause* has been sin, even that odious defect in their experience, whereby there has been wanting a sense of the awful and holy majesty of God as present with them, and their nothingness and vileness before him, proportionable to the sense they have had of God's grace and the love of Christ. And the same is true in many cases of unsuitable boldness; a disposition to speak with authority, intemperate zeal, and many other things that sometimes appear under great religious affections. And sometimes the vehemence of the motion of the animal spirits, under great affections, is owing

in considerable measure to experiences being thus partial. I have known it in several instances, that persons have been greatly affected with the dying love of Christ, and the consideration of the happiness of the enjoyment of him in heaven, and other things of that nature, and their animal spirits at the same time have been in a great emotion; but in the midst of it they have had such a deep sense of the awful, holy majesty of God, as at once composed them, and quieted animal nature, without diminishing their comfort, but only has made it of a better and more solid nature. When they have had a sense both of the majesty and grace of God, one thing has as it were balanced another, and caused a more happy sedateness and composure of body and mind.

From these things we may learn how to judge of experiences, and to estimate their goodness. Those are not always the best which are attended with the most violent affections, and most vehement motions of the animal spirits, or have the greatest effects on the body. Nor are they always the best, that most dispose persons to abound in talk to others, and to speak in the most vehement manner, though these things often arise from the greatness of spiritual experiences. But those are the most excellent experiences that are qualified as follows: 1. That have the *least mixture*, or are the most purely spiritual. 2. That are the *least deficient* and partial, in which the diverse things that appertain to Christian experience are proportionable one to another. And, 3. That are raised to the *highest degree*. It is no matter how high they are raised if they are qualified as before mentioned, the higher the better. Experiences, thus qualified, will be attended with the most amiable behaviour, will bring forth the most solid and sweet fruits, will be the most durable, and will have the greatest effect on the abiding temper of the soul.

If God is pleased to carry on this work, and it should prove to be the dawning of a general revival of the Christian church, it may be expected that the time will come before long, when the experiences of Christians shall be much more generally thus qualified. We must expect green fruits before we have ripe ones. It is probable that hereafter the discoveries which the saints shall have of divine things, will be in a much higher degree than yet have been; but yet shall be so ordered of an infinitely wise and all-sufficient God, that they shall not have so great an effect, in proportion, on the body, and will be less oppressive to nature. The outward manifestations will rather be like those that were in *Stephen*, when he was full of

the Holy Ghost, when *all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.* Their inward fulness of the Spirit of God, in his divine, amiable and sweet influences, shall as it were shine forth in an heavenly aspect, and the manner of speech and behaviour.—But,

3. There is another thing concerning the experiences of Christians, of which it is of yet greater importance that we should be aware, than of the preceding, and that is the *degenerating of experiences.* What I mean is something diverse from the mere decay of experiences, or their gradually vanishing, by persons losing their sense of things; *viz.* experiences growing by degrees worse and worse in their kind, more and more partial and deficient; in which things are more out of due proportion, and also have more and more of a corrupt mixture; the spiritual part decreases, and the other useless and hurtful parts greatly increase. This I have seen in very many instances; and great are the mischiefs that have risen through want of being more aware of it.

There is commonly, as I observed before, in high experiences, besides that which is spiritual, a mixture of three things, *viz.* natural or common affections, workings of the imagination, and a degree of self-righteousness or spiritual pride. Now it often comes to pass, that through persons not distinguishing the wheat from the chaff, and for want of watchfulness and humble jealousy of themselves—and by laying great weight on the natural and imaginary part, yielding to it, and indulging it whereby that part grows and increases, and the spiritual part decreases—the devil sets in, and works in the corrupt part, and cherishes it to his utmost. At length the experiences of some persons, who began well, come to little else but violent motions of carnal affections, with great heats of the imagination, a great degree of enthusiasm, and swelling of spiritual pride: very much like some fruits which bud, blossom and kernel well, but afterwards are blasted with an excess of moisture; so that though the bulk is monstrously great, yet there is little else in it but what is useless and unwholesome. It appears to me very probable, that many of the heresies that have arisen, and sects that have appeared in the Christian world, in one age and another, with wild enthusiastic notions and practices, began at first by this means, that it was such a degenerating of experiences which first gave rise to them, or at least led the way to them.—Nothing in the world so much exposes to this, as an unheeded spiritual pride and self-confidence, and persons being conceited of their own

stock, without a humble, daily, and continual dependence on God. And this very thing seems to be typified of old, by the corrupting of the *Manna*. Some of the children of *Israel*, because they had gathered a store of *Manna*, trusted in it; there being, as they apprehended, sufficient in the store they had gathered and laid up, without humbly looking to heaven, and stooping to the earth for daily supplies; and the consequence was, that their *Manna* bred worms and stank, *Exod.* xvi. 20. pride above all things promotes this degeneracy of experiences, because it grieves and quenches the spirit of the Lamb of God; and so it kills the spiritual part, cherishes the natural part, inflames the carnal affections, and heats the imagination. —The unhappy subject of such a degeneracy, for the most part, is not sensible of his own calamity; but because he finds himself still violently moved, has greater heats of zeal, and more vehement motions of his animal spirits, thinks himself fuller of the spirit of God than ever. But indeed it is with him, as the apostle says of the *Galatians*, Gal. iii. 3. *Having begun in the spirit, they are made perfect by the flesh.*

By the mixture there is of *common* affection with love to God, the love of true Christians is liable to degenerate, and to be more and more built on a supposition of being his high and peculiar favourites, and less and less on an apprehension of the excellency of God's nature as he is in himself. So the joy of Christians, by reason of the mixture there is with spiritual joy, is liable to degenerate, and to become little else but joy in self, joy in a person's own supposed eminency, and distinction from others in the favour of God. So zeal, that at first might be in great part spiritual, yet, in a long continuance of opposition and controversy, may degenerate more and more into human and proud passion, and may come to bitterness, and even a degree of hatred. And so love to the brethren may by degrees come to little else but fondness, and zeal for a party; yea, through a mixture of a natural love to the opposite sex, may degenerate more and more, till it issues in that which is criminal and gross. And I leave it with those who are better acquainted with eccclesiastical history, to enquire whether such a degeneracy of affections as this, might not be the first thing that led the way, and gave occasion to the rise of the abominable notions of some sects that have arisen, concerning the community of women. However that is, yet certainly the mutual embraces and kisses of persons of different sexes, under the notion of Christian love and holy kisses, are utterly to be disallowed and abominated, as having the most direct tendency

quickly to turn Christian love into unclean and brutish lust, which will not be the better, but ten times the worse, for being christened by the name of *Christian love*. I should also think it advisable, that meetings of young people, of both sexes, in the evening, by themselves, without a minister, or any elder people amongst them, for religious exercises, should be avoided. For though for the present, while their minds are greatly solemn with lively impressions, and a deep sense of divine things, there may appear no ill consequence; yet we must look to the further end of things, and guard against future dangers, and advantages that satan might gain against us. As a lively, solemn sense of divine things on the minds of young persons may gradually decay, so there will be danger that an ill improvement of these meetings may gradually prevail; if not in any unsuitable behaviour while together in the meeting, yet, when they break up to go home, they may naturally consort together in couples, for other than religious purposes; and it may at last so terminate, that young persons may go to such meetings, chiefly for the sake of such an opportunity for company-keeping.

The *defect* there sometimes is in the experiences of Christians exposes them to degenerate, as well as the mixture that they have. Deficient maimed experiences do sometimes become more and more so. The mind being wholly intent upon those things that are in view, and those that are most wanting being neglected, there is less and less of them, and so the gap for corruption to come in grows wider and wider. And commonly both these causes operate together.—We had need to be *jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy*, as the apostle was over the Christian *Corinthians, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled* Eve *through his subtilty, so our minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* God indeed will never suffer his true saints totally and finally to fall away, but yet may punish their pride and self-confidence, by suffering them to be long led into a dreadful wilderness, by the subtil serpent, to the great wounding of their own souls and the interest of religion.

Before I dismiss this head of the degenerating of experiences, I would mention one thing more that tends to it; and that is, persons aiming in their experience to go beyond the rule of God's word, *i. e.* aiming at that *which is indeed*, in some respect, beyond the rule. Thus some persons have endeavoured utterly to root out and abolish all natural affection, or any special affection or respect to their near relations, un-

der a notion that no other love ought to be allowed but spiritual love, and that all other love is to be abolished as carnal, and that it becomes Christians to love none upon the account of any thing else but the image of God; and that therefore love should go out to one and another only in that proportion in which the image of God is seen in them. They might as well argue that a man ought utterly to disallow of, and endeavour to abolish all love or appetite, to their daily food, under a notion that it is a carnal appetite, and that no other appetite should be tolerated but spiritual appetites. Why should the Saints strive after that, as a high attainment in holiness, which the apostle in *Rom.* i. 31. mentions as one instance wherein the Heathen had got to the most horrid pass in wickedness, *viz. being without natural affection?* Some have doubted whether they might pray for the conversion and salvation of the souls of their children, any more than for the souls of others; because the salvation of the souls of others would be as much to God's glory, as the salvation of their children; and they have supposed that to pray most for their own, would shew a selfish disposition. So they have been afraid to tolerate a compassionate grief and concern for their nearest friends, for fear it would be an argument of want of resignation to God.—It is true, there is great danger of persons setting their hearts too much upon their earthly friends; our love to earthly friends ought to be under the government of the love of God, and should be attended with a spirit of submission and resignation to his will, and every thing should be subordinated to his glory. But that is no argument that these affections should be entirely abolished. The Creator of the world has put them in us, for the good of mankind, and because he saw they would be needful for them, as they must be united in society in the present state, and are of great use when kept in their proper place; and to endeavour totally to root them out, would be to reproach and oppose the wisdom of the Creator. Nor is the being of these natural Inclinations, if well regulated, inconsistent with any part of our duty to God, or any argument of a sinful selfishness, any more than our natural abhorrence of pain, and the natural inclination to ease that was in the man Christ Jesus himself.

It is the duty of parents to be more concerned and to pray more for the salvation of their children, than for the children of their neighbours; as it is the duty of a minister to be more concerned for the salvation of the souls of his flock, and to pray more for them, than those of other congregations, because they are committed to his care. So our near friends are more com-

mitted to our care than others, and our near neighbours, than those that live at a great distance; and the people of our land and nation are more, in some sense, committed to our care than the people of *China*, and we ought to pray more for them, and to be more concerned that the kingdom of Christ should flourish among them, than in another Country, where it would be as much, and no more, for the glory of God. Compassion ought to be especially exercised towards friends, *Job.* vi. 14. Christ did not frown upon a special affection and compassion for near friends; but rather countenanced and encouraged it, from time to time, in those who, in the exercise of such an affection and compassion, applied to him for relief for their friends; as in the instance of the woman of *Canaan*, *Jairus*, *Mary* and *Martha*, the centurion, the widow of *Nain*, and many others. The apostle *Paul*, though as much resigned and devoted to God, and under the power of his love, perhaps as any mere man that ever lived, had a peculiar concern for his countrymen the *Jews*, the rather on that account, that they were his *Brethren and Kinsmen according to the flesh.* He had a very high degree of compassionate grief for them, insomuch that he tells us he had great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart for them, and could wish himself accursed from Christ for them.—Many things are proper for the Saints in Heaven, which are not suitable to our state in this world: and for Christians, in these and other instances, to affect to go beyond the present state of mankind, and what God has apponted as fit for it, is an instance of that which the wise man calls *being righteous over-much*, and has a tendency to open a door for Satan, and to cause religious affections to degenerate into something very unbecoming Christians.—Thus I have, as I proposed, taken notice of some things with regard to the inward experiences of Christians, by which *Satan* has an advantage. I now proceed,

II. To take notice of something with regard to the *external effects* of experiences, which also gives *Satan* an advantage. What I refer to, is the secret and unaccountable influence that custom has upon persons, with respect to the external effects and manifestations of the inward affections of the mind. By custom I mean, both a person's being accustomed to a thing in himself, in his own common, allowed and indulged practice; and also the countenance and approbation of others amongst whom he dwells, by their general voice and practice. It is well known, and appears sufficiently by what I have said already in this treatise and elsewhere, that I am far

from ascribing all the late uncommon effects and outward manifestations of inward experiences to custom and fashion, as some do; I know it to be otherwise, if it be possible for me to know any thing of this nature by the most critical observation, under all manner of opportunities of observing. But yet this also is exceeding evident by experience, that custom has a strange influence in these things. I know it by the different manners and degrees of external effects and manifestations of great affections and high discoveries, in different towns, according to what persons are gradually led into, and to which they are insensibly habituated, by example and custom; and also in the same place, at different times, according to their conduct. If some person conducts them, that much countenances and encourages such kind of outward manifestations of great affections, they naturally and insensibly prevail, and grow by degrees unavoidable; but, when afterwards they come under another kind of conduct, the manner of external appearances will strangely alter. And yet it seems to be without any proper design or contrivance of those in whom there is this alteration; it is not properly affected by them, but the influence of example and custom is secret and insensible to the persons themselves. These things have a vast influence in the manner of persons manifesting their joys, whether with smiles and an air of lightness, or whether with more solemnity and reverence; and so they have a great influence as to the disposition persons have under high affections to abound in talk; and also as to the manner of their speaking, the loudness and vehemence of their speech. It would, however, be exceeding unjust, and against all the evidence of fact and experience, and the reason of things, to ascribe to custom all dispositions to be much in speaking to others, and to speak in a very earnest manner. It is manifest that example and custom has some way or other, a secret and unsearchable influence on those actions that are involuntary, in different places, and in the same places at different times.

It would be very unreasonable, and prejudicial to the interest of religion, to frown upon all these extraordinary external effects and manifestations of great religious affections.—A measure of them is natural, necessary and beautiful, and the effect in no wise disproportioned to the spiritual cause, and is of great benefit to promote religion. Yet I think they greatly err who suppose that these things should be wholly unlimited, and that all should be encouraged in going to the utmost

length that they feel themselves inclined to. There ought to be a gentle restraint upon these things, and there should be a prudent care taken of persons in such extraordinary circumstances. They should be moderately advised at proper seasons, not to make more ado than there is need of, but rather to hold a restraint upon their inclinations; otherwise extraordinary outward effects will grow upon them, they will be more and more natural and unavoidable, and the extraordinary outward show will increase, without any increase of the internal cause. Persons will find themselves under a kind of necessity of making a great ado, with less and less affection of soul, till at length almost any slight emotion will set them going; and they will be more and more violent and boisterous, and will grow louder and louder, till their actions and behaviour becomes indeed very absurd. These things experience proves. Thus I have taken notice of the more general causes whence the errors that have attended this great revival of religion have risen, and under each head have observed some particular errors that have flowed from these fountains.

SECT. IV.

Some particular Errors that have risen from several of the preceding causes—Censuring others.

In some cases perhaps they have been chiefly owing to one, and in others to another, and in others to the influence of several, or all conjunctly. And here the first thing I would take notice of is, censuring professing Christians of good standing in the visible church, as unconverted. I need not repeat what I have elsewhere said to shew this to be against the plain, frequent and strict prohibitions of the word of God. It is the worst disease that has attended this work, most contrary to the spirit and rules of Christianity, and of worst consequences.—There is a most unhappy tincture that the minds of many, both ministers and people, have received that way. The manner of many has been, when they first enter into conversation with any person that seems to make any pretences to religion, to fix a judgment of him, from his manner of talking of religious things, whether he be converted, or experimentally acquainted with vital piety or not; and then to treat him accordingly, and freely to express their thoughts of him to others, especially those of whom they have a good opinion, as true Christians,

and accepted as brethren and companions in Christ. Or if they do not declare their minds expressly, yet by their manner of speaking of them, at least to their friends, they will show plainly what their thoughts are. So, when they have heard any minister pray or preach, their first work has been to observe him on a design of discerning him, whether he be a converted man or no; whether he prays like one that feels the saving power of God's Spirit in his heart, and whether he preaches like one that knows what he says. It has been so much the way in some places, that many new converts do not know but it is their duty to do so, they know no other way. And when once persons yield to such a notion, and give in to such a humour, they will quickly grow very discerning in their own apprehension, and think they can easily tell a hypocrite. And when once they have passed their censure, every thing seems to confirm it; they see more and more in the person they have censured, that seems to them to shew plainly that he is an unconverted man. And then, if the person censured be a minister, every thing in his public performances seems dead and sapless, and to do them no good at all, but on the contrary to be of a deadening influence, and poisonous to the soul; yea, it seems worse and worse to them, his preaching grows more and more intolerable. Which is owing to a secret, strong prejudice, that steals in more and more upon the mind, as experience plainly and certainly shows. When the Spirit of God was wonderfully poured out in this place more than seven years ago, and near thirty souls in a week, take one with another, for five or six weeks together, were to appearance brought home to Christ, and all the town seemed to be alive and full of God, there was no such notion or humour prevailing here. When ministers preached here, as very many did at that time, young and old, our people did not go about to discern whether they were men of experience or not; they did not know that they must. Mr. *Stoddard* never brought them up in that way; it did not seem natural to them to go about any thing of that nature, nor did any such thing enter into their hearts; but, when any minister preached, the business of every one was to listen and attend to what he said, and apply it to his own heart, and make the utmost improvement of it. And it is remarkable, that never did there appear such a disposition in the people to relish, approve of, and admire ministers preaching as at that time. Such expressions as these were frequent in the mouths of one and another, on occasion of the preaching of strangers here, *viz. That they rejoiced there*

were so many such eminent ministers in the country; and they wondered they never heard the fame of them before. They were thankful that other towns had so good means; and the like. And scarcely ever did any minister preach here, but his preaching did some remarkable service; as I had good opportunity to know, because at that time I had particular acquaintance, with most of the persons in the town, in their soul-concerns. That it has been so much otherwise of late in many places in the land is another instance of the secret and powerful influence of custom and example.

There has been an unhappy disposition in some ministers toward their brethren in the ministry in this respect, which has encouraged and greatly promoted such a spirit among some of their people. A wrong improvement has been made of Christ's scourging the buyers and sellers out of the temple. It has been expected by some, that Christ was now about thus to purge his house of unconverted ministers; and this has made it more natural to them to think that they should do Christ service, and act as co-workers with him, to put to their hand, and endeavour by all means to cashier those ministers that they thought to be unconverted. Indeed it appears to me probable that the time is coming when awful judgments will be executed on unfaithful ministers, and that no sort of men in the world will be so much exposed to divine judgments. But then we should leave that work to Christ, who is the searcher of hearts and to whom vengeance belongs; and not, without warrant, take the scourge out of his hand into our own. There has been too much of a disposition in some, as it were, to give ministers over as reprobates, being looked upon as wolves in sheeps' clothing; which has tended to promote and encourage a Spirit of bitterness towards them, and to make it natural to treat them too much as if they knew God hated them. If God's children knew that others were reprobates, it would not be required of them to love them; we may hate those that we know God hates; as it is lawful to hate the devil, and as the saints at the day of judgment will hate the wicked.* Some have been

* In these expressions our excellent Author is not sufficiently guarded.—Our *knowing* or *not knowing* persons to be reprobates, in any sense of that term, is no sufficient *standard* of obligation to hate or to love them, in the way of benevolence. The obligation to love or to hate is founded on the *nature* of the *object*, as good or bad. But here we are liable to err, for want of discriminating between a *person* and his *criminal qualities*. Now every criminal object should be regarded by us a *being* possessed of physical powers; but this existence and these powers, being the product of divine bounty, deserve our benevolent approbation, not our hatred. On the other hand, every criminal object, or agent, is chargeable with

too apt to look for fire from heaven upon particular ministers; and this has naturally excited that disposition to call for it, which Christ rebuked in his disciples at *Samaria*. For my part, though I believe no sort of men on earth are so exposed to spiritual judgments as wicked ministers, yet I feel no disposition to treat any minister as if I supposed that he was finally rejected of God; for I cannot but hope that there is coming a day of such great grace, a time so appointed for magnifying the riches and sovereignty of divine mercy, beyond what ever was, that a great number of unconverted ministers will obtain mercy. There were no sort of persons in Christ's time that were so guilty, and so hardened, and towards whom Christ manifested such great indignation, as the priests and scribes; and there were no such persecutors of Christ and his disciples as they. And yet in that great outpouring of the spirit that began on the day of *Pentecost*, though it began with the common people, yet in the progress of the work, after awhile, *a great company of priests in* Jerusalem *were obedient to the faith*, Acts vi. 7. And *Saul* one of the most violent of all the persecuting *Pharisees* became afterwards the greatest promoter of the work of God that ever was. I hope we shall yet see in many instances a fulfilment of that in Isa. xxix. 24. *They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.*

Nothing has been gained by this practice. The end that some have aimed at in it has not been obtained, nor is ever like to be. Possibly some have openly censured ministers, and encouraged their people's uneasiness under them, in hopes that the uneasiness would be so general, and so great, that unconverted ministers in general would be cast off, and then things would go on happily. But there is no likelihood of it. The devil indeed has obtained his end; this practice has bred a great deal of unhappiness among ministers and people, has spoiled Christians' enjoyment of Sabbaths, and made them their most uneasy, uncomfortable and unprofitable days, and has stirred up great contention, and set all in a flame. In one place and another, where there was a glorious work of God's Spirit begun, it has in a great measure knocked all in the head, and

criminal *designs* and hateful *qualities* exclusively his own; and these alone deserve our hatred. In no other sense but this latter can it be truly said that God hates the workers of iniquity, wicked men, or even the devil. But if so, in no other sense or degree ought we to hate them. Had our Author been scientifically acquainted with that principle which accounts for the true origin of moral evil, he would have seen the impropriety of his statement, W.

their ministers hold their places. Some have aimed at a better end in censuring ministers; they have supposed it to be a likely means to awaken them. Whereas indeed no one thing has had so great a tendency to prevent the awakening of disaffected ministers in general; and no one thing has actually had such influence to lock up the minds of ministers against any good effect of this great work of God in the land. I have known instances of some who seemed to be much moved by the first appearance of this work, but since have seemed to be greatly deadened by what has appeared of this nature. And, if there be one or two instances of ministers who have been awakened by it, there are ten to one on whom it has had a contrary influence. The worst enemies of this work have been inwardly caused by this practice; they have made a shield of it to defend their consciences, and have been glad that it has been carried to so great a length; at the same time that they have looked upon it, and improved it, as a door opened for them to be more bold in opposing the work in general.

There is no such dreadful danger of natural men being undone by our forbearing thus to censure them, and carrying it towards them as visible Christians. It will be no bloody, hell-peopling charity, as some seem to suppose, when we only allow them to be worthy of a public charity, on their profession and good external behaviour; any more than *Judas* was in danger of being deceived, by Christ's treating him a long time as a disciple, and sending him forth as an apostle. Christ did not then take it upon him to act as the judge and searcher of hearts, but only as the head of the visible Church. Indeed such a charity as this may be abused by some, as every thing is, and will be, that is in its own nature proper, and of never so good tendency. I say nothing against dealing thoroughly with conscience, by the most convincing and searching dispensation of the word of God. I do not desire *that* sword should be sheathed, or gently handled by ministers; but let it be used as a two-edged sword, to pierce, even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow; let conscience be dealt with, without any compliments; let ministers handle it in flaming fire, without having any more mercy on it, than the furnace has on those metals that are tried in it. But we should let men's persons alone: let the word of God judge them, but let us not take it upon us till we we have a warrant for it.

Some have been ready to censure ministers because they seem, in comparison of some other ministers, to be very cold

and lifeless in their ministerial performances. But then it should be considered, that, for ought we know, God may hereafter raise up ministers of so much more excellent and heavenly qualifications, and so much more spiritual and divine in their performances, that there may appear as great a difference between them, and those who now seem the most lively, as there is now between them, and others that are called dead and sapless. And those that are now called lively ministers may appear to their hearers, when they compare them with others who shall excel them, as wretchedly mean, and their performances poor, dead, dry things; and many may be ready to be prejudiced against them, as accounting them good for nothing, and it may be calling them soul-murderers. What a poor figure may we suppose the most lively of us, and those that are most admired by the people, make in the eyes of one of the Saints of heaven, any otherwise than as their deadness, deformity and rottenness is hid by the vail of Christ's righteousness?

Another thing that has been supposed to be sufficient warrant for openly censuring ministers as unconverted, is their opposing this work of God that has lately been carried on in the land. And there can be no doubt with me but that opposition against this work may be such, as to render either ministers or people truly scandalous, and expose them to public ecclesiastical censure; and that ministers hereby may utterly defeat the design of their ministry (as I observed before) and so give their people just cause of uneasiness. I should not think that any person had power to oblige me constantly to attend the ministry of one who did from time to time plainly pray and preach against this work, or speak reproachfully of it frequently in his public performances, after all Christian methods had been used for a remedy, and to no purpose.—But to determine how far opposing this work is consistent with a state of grace, is, as experience shews, a very difficult thing, who can tell how far, and for how long time, some persons of good experience in their own souls may proceed, through prejudices they have received from the errors that have been mixed with this work, or through some peculiar disadvantages they are under to behold things in a right view, by reason of the persons they converse with, or their own cold and dead frames? I have seen what abundantly convinces me, that the business is too high for me; I am glad that God has not committed such a difficult affair to me; I can joyfully leave it wholly in his hands, who is infinitely fit for it, without meddling

at all with it myself.' We may represent it as exceeding dangerous to oppose this work, for this we have good warrant in the word of God; but I know of no necessity we are under to determine whether it be possible for those that are guilty of it to be in a state of grace or no.

God seems so strictly to have forbidden our judging our brethren in the visible church, not only because he knew that we were infinitely too weak, fallible and blind, to be well capacitated for it, but also because he knew that it was not a work suited to our proud hearts; that it would be setting us vastly too high, and making us too much of Lords over our fellow-creatures. Judging our brethren, and passing a condemnatory sentence upon them, seems to carry in it an act of *authority*, especially to sentence them with respect to that state of their hearts, on which depends their liableness to eternal damnation. This is evident by such interrogations as the following, to hear which from God's mouth, is enough to make us shrink into nothing with shame and confusion, under a sense of our own blindness and worthlesness, Rom. xiv. 4. *Who art thou that judgeth another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.* And Jam. iv. 12. *There is one lawgiver that is able to save and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another?* Our wise and merciful shepherd has graciously taken care not to lay in our way such a temptation to pride; he has cut up all such poison out of our pasture; and therefore we should not desire to have it restored. Blessed be his name, that he has not laid such a temptation in the way of my pride! I know that, in order to be fit for this business, I must not only be vastly more knowing, but more humble than I am.—Though I believe some of God's own children have of late been very guilty in this matter, yet, by what is said of it in the scripture, it appears to me very likely, that God will awfully rebuke that practice. May it in sovereign and infinite mercy be prevented, by the deep and open humiliation of those that have openly practised it!

As this practice ought to be avoided, so should all such open, visible marks of distinction and separation that imply it (as particularly, distinguishing such as we have judged to be in a converted state with the compellations of *brother* or *sister*) any further than there is a visible ecclesiastical distinction. In those places where it is the manner to receive such, and such only, to the communion of the visible church, as recommend themselves by giving a satisfying account of their inward experiences, there Christians may openly distinguish such per-

sons, in their speech and ordinary behaviour, with a visible separation, without being inconsistent with themselves. I do not now pretend to meddle with that controversy, whether such an account of experience be requisite to church-fellowship. But certainly, to admit persons to communion with us as brethren in the visible church, and then visibly to reject them, and to make an open distinction between them and others, by different names or appellations, is to be inconsistent with ourselves. It is to make a visible church within a visible church, and visibly to divide between sheep and goats, setting one on the right hand, and the other on the left.—This bitter root of censoriousness must be totally rooted out, as we would prepare the way of the Lord. It has nourished and upheld many other things contrary to the humility, meekness and love of the gospel. The minds of many have received an unhappy turn, with their religion: there is a certain point or sharpness, a disposition to a kind of warmth, that does not savour of that meek, lamb-like, sweet disposition that becomes Christians. Many have now been so long habituated to it, that they do not know how to get out of it; but we must get out of it; the point and sharpness must be blunted, and we must learn another way of manifesting our zeal for God.

Some have a way of reflecting on others, and censuring them in open prayer; which, though it has a fair shew of love, is indeed the boldest way of reproaching others imaginable; because there is implied in it an appeal to the most high God, concerning the truth of their censures and reflections.—And some have a way of joining a sort of imprecations with their petitions for others, though but conditional ones, that appear to me wholly needless and improper. They pray that others may either be converted or removed. I never heard nor read of any such thing practised in the church of God till now, unless it be with respect to some of the most visibly and notoriously abandoned enemies of the church of God. This is a sort of cursing men in our prayers, adding a curse with our blessing; whereas the rule is, *Bless, and curse not.* To pray that God would kill another, is to curse him as *Elisha* cursed the children who came out of *Bethel.* And the case must be very great and extraordinary indeed to warrant it, unless we were prophets, and did not speak our own words, but words indited by the immediate inspiration of the spirit of God. It is pleaded, that if God has no design of converting others, it is best for them and others, that they should be immediately taken

away and sent to hell before they have contracted more guilt. To which I would say, that so it was best for those children who met *Elisha*, seeing God had no design of converting them, to die immediately, as they did; but yet *Elisha's* imprecating that sudden death upon them, was cursing them; and therefore would not have been lawful for one who did not speak in the name of the Lord as a prophet.—And then, if we give way to such things as these, where shall we stop? A child that suspects he has an unconverted Father and Mother, may pray openly that his Father and Mother may either be converted, or taken away and sent to hell now quickly, before their guilt is greater. For unconverted parents are as likely to poison the souls of their family in their manner of training them up, as unconverted ministers are to poison their people. And so it might come to be a common thing all over the country, for children to pray after this manner concerning their parents, brethren and sisters concerning one another, husbands concerning their wives, and wives concerning their husbands; and so for persons to pray concerning all their unconverted friends and neighbours. And not only so, but we may also pray concerning all those saints who are not lively Christians, that they may either be enlivened or taken away; if that be true which is often said by some at this day, that these cold dead Saints do more hurt than natural men, and lead more souls to hell, and that it would be well for mankind if they were all dead.

How needless are such petitions or imprecations as these? What benefit is there of them? Is it not sufficient for us to pray that God would provide for his Church and the good of souls, take care of his own flock, and give it needful means and advantages for its spiritual prosperity? Does God need to be directed by us in what way he shall do it? What need we ask of God to do it by killing such and such persons, if he do not convert them? unless we delight in the thoughts of God's answering us in such terrible ways, and with such awful manifestations of his wrath to our fellow-creatures.—And why do not ministers direct sinners to pray for themselves, that God would either convert them or kill them, and send them to hell now, before their guilt is greater? In this way we should lead persons in the next place to self-murder: for many probably would soon begin to think, that what they may pray for, they may seek by the use of means.

Some, with whom I have discoursed about this way of praying, have said, That the Spirit of God, as it were, forces

out such words from their mouths, when otherwise they should not dare to utter them. But such kind of impulse does not look like the influence of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God indeed sometimes strongly inclines men to utter words; not by putting expressions into the mouth, and urging to utter them, but by filling the heart with a sense of divine things, and holy affections, whence the mouth speaks. That other way of being urged to use certain expressions, by an unaccountable force, is very probably from the influence of the devil.

SECT. V.

Of errors connected with Lay-exhorting.

ANOTHER thing, in the management of which there has been much error and misconduct, is lay-exhorting; about which there has been abundance of disputing, jangling and contention. In the midst of these disputes, I suppose that all are agreed as to these two things, *viz.* 1. That all exhorting one another by lay-men is not unlawful or improper; but, on the contrary, that such exhorting is a Christian duty. And, 2. I suppose also, all will allow that there is some kind or way of exhorting and teaching which belongs only to *the office of teachers.* All will allow that God has appointed such an office as that of *teachers* in the Christian church, and therefore doubtless will allow that something or other is proper and peculiar to that office, or some business of *teaching* that does not belong as much to others as to them. If there be any way of teaching that is peculiar to that office, then for others to take that upon them, is to invade the office of a minister; which doubtless is very sinful, and is often so represented in scripture. But the great difficulty is to settle the bounds, and to tell exactly, how far lay-men may go, and when they exceed their limits; which is a matter of so much difficulty, that I do not wonder if many in their zeal have transgressed. The two ways of teaching and exhorting, the one of which ought ordinarily to be left to ministers, and the other of which may and ought to be practised by the people, may be expressed by those two names of *preaching*, and *exhorting* in a way of *Christian conversation.* But then a great deal of difficulty and controversy arises to determine what is *preaching*, and what is *Christian conversation.* However, I will humbly offer my thoughts concerning this subject of lay-exhorting, as follows.

I. The common people, in exhorting one another, ought not to clothe themselves with the like authority with that which is proper for ministers. There is a certain authority that ministers have and should exercise in teaching, as well as in governing the flock. Teaching is spoken of in scripture as an act of authority, 1 Tim. ii. 12. In order to a man's preaching, special authority must be committed to him, Rom. x. 15. *How shall they preach, except they be sent?* Ministers in this work of teaching and exhorting are clothed with authority, as Christ's messengers, Mal. ii. 7. as representing him, and so speaking in his name, and in his stead, 2 Cor. v. 18—20. And it seems to be the most honourable thing that belongs to the office of a minister of the gospel, that to him is committed the word of reconciliation, and that he has power to preach the gospel, as Christ's messenger, and speaking in his name. The apostle seems to speak of it as such, 1 Cor. i. 16, 17. Ministers therefore, in the exercise of this power, may clothe themselves with authority in speaking, or may teach others in an authoritative manner, Tit. ii. 15. *These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority: Let no man despise thee.* But the common people, in exhorting one another, ought not thus to exhort in an authoritative manner. There is a great deal of difference between teaching as a *father* amongst a company of children, and counselling in a *brotherly* way, as the children may kindly counsel and admonish one another. Those that are mere brethren ought not to assume authority in exhorting, though one may be better, and have more experience than another. Laymen ought not to exhort as though they were the ambassadors or messengers of Christ, as ministers do; nor should they exhort, warn, and charge *in his name*, according to the ordinary import of such an expression, when applied to teaching.—Indeed, in one sense, a Christian ought to do every thing he does in religion in the name of Christ, *i. e.* he ought to act in a dependence on him as his head and mediator, and do all for his glory. But the expression as it is usually understood, when applied to teaching or exhorting, is speaking in Christ's stead, and as having a message from him.

Persons may clothe themselves with authority in speaking, either by the authoritative words they make use of, or in the manner and authoritative air of their speaking. Though some may think that this latter is a matter of indifferency, or at least of small importance, yet there is indeed a great deal in it; a person may go much out of his place, and be guilty of a great degree of assuming, in the manner of his speaking those words,

which, as they might be spoken, might be proper for him.—The same words, spoken in a different manner, may express what is very diverse. Doubtless there may be as much hurt in the manner of a person's speaking, as there may in his looks; but the wise man tells us, that *an high look is an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xxi. 4. Again, a man may clothe himself with authority, in the circumstances under which he speaks; as for instance, if he sets himself up as a *public teacher*. Here I would have it observed, that I do not suppose that a person is guilty of this, merely because he speaks in the hearing of many. Persons may speak only in a way of conversation, and yet speak in the hearing of a great number, as they often do in their common conversation about temporal things, at feasts and entertainments, where women as well as others converse freely together, in the hearing it may be of a great number, and yet without offence. And if their conversation on such occasions should turn on spiritual things, and they should speak as freely and openly, I do not see why it would not be as harmless. Nor do I think, that besides a great number being present, persons speaking with a very earnest and loud voice, is for them to set up themselves as public teachers, if they do it from no contrivance or premeditated design, or as purposely directing themselves to a congregation or multitude. But persons speaking in conversation, or when all freely converse one with another—directing themselves to none but those that are near them, and fall in their way—in that earnest and pathetic manner, to which the subject naturally leads, and as it were constrains them: I say, that for persons to do thus, though many happen to hear them, does not appear to me to be setting themselves up as public teachers. Yea, suppose all this happens to be in a meeting-house; I do not think that this much alters the case, provided the solemnity of public service and divine ordinances be over; and provided also that they speak in no authoritative way, but in an humble manner, becoming their degree and station, though they speak very earnestly and pathetically.—Indeed modesty might in ordinary cases restrain some persons, (as women and those that are young,) from so much as speaking when a great number are present, at least, when some of those present are much their superiors, unless they are spoken to. And yet, the case may be so extraordinary as fully to warrant it. If something very extraordinary happens to persons, or if they are in extraordinary circumstances; as if a person be struck with lightning in the midst of a great company, or if he lies a-dying, it appears

to none any violation of modesty for him to speak freely before those that are much his superiors. I have seen some women and children in such circumstances, on religious accounts, that it has appeared to me no more a transgressing the laws of humility and modesty for them to speak freely, let who will be present, than if they were in danger of dying.

But then may a man be said to set up himself as a public teacher, when in a set speech, of design, he directs himself to a multitude, as looking that they should compose themselves to attend to what he has to say. And much more when this is a contrived and premeditated thing, without any thing like a constraint by an extraordinary sense or affection; and more still, when meetings are appointed on purpose to hear lay-persons exhort, and they take it as their business to be speakers, while they expect that others should come, and compose themselves, and attend as hearers. When private Christians take it upon them in private meetings to act as the masters or presidents of the assembly, and accordingly from time to time to teach and exhort the rest, this has the appearance of authoritative teaching.

When private Christians, who are no more than mere brethren, exhort and admonish one another, it ought to be in an humble manner, rather by way of intreaty, than with authority; and the more, according as the station of persons is lower. Thus it becomes women, and those that are young, ordinarily to be at a greater distance from any appearance of authority in speaking than others. Thus much at least is evident by 1 Tim. ii. 9, 11, 12. That lay-persons ought not to exhort one another as clothed with authority, is a general rule; but it cannot justly be supposed to extend to heads of families in their own families. Every Christian family is a little church, and the heads of it are its authoritative teachers and governors. Nor can it extend to school-masters among their scholars; and some other cases might perhaps be mentioned, that ordinary discretion will distinguish, where a man's circumstances do properly clothe him with authority, and render it fit and suitable for him to counsel and admonish others in an authoritative manner.

II. No man but a minister duly appointed to that sacred calling, ought to follow teaching and exhorting *as a calling*, or so as to neglect that which is his *proper calling*. Having the office of a teacher in the church of God implies two things: 1. A being invested with the *authority* of a teacher; and 2. A being called to the *business* of a teacher, to make it the

business of his life. Therefore that man who is not a minister, taking either of these upon him, invades the office of a minister. Concerning assuming the authority of a minister I have spoken already. But if a lay-man do not assume authority in his teaching, yet if he forsakes his proper calling, or doth so at least in a great measure, and spends his time in going about from house to house to counsel and exhort, he goes beyond his line and violates Christian rules. Those that have the office of teachers or exhorters, have it for their calling, and should make it their business, as a business proper to their office; and none should make it their business but such, Rom. xii. 3—8. *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the proportion of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ.—He that teacheth let him wait on teaching, or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.* 1 Cor. xii. 29. *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?* 1 Cor. vii. 20. *Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.* 1 Thess. iv. 11. *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.*

It will be a very dangerous thing for lay-men, in either of these respects, to invade the office of a minister. If this be common among us, we shall be in danger of having a stop put to the work of God, of the Ark turning aside from us, before it comes to Mount *Zion*, and of God making a breach upon us; as of old there was an unhappy stop put to the joy of the congregation of *Israel*, in bringing up the Ark of God, because others carried it besides the *Levites*. And therefore *David*, when the error was found out, says, 1 Chron. xv. 2. *None ought to carry the Ark of God, but the* Levites *only; for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the Ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.* And because one presumed to touch the Ark who was not of the sons of *Aaron*, therefore the Lord made a breach upon them, and covered their day of rejoicing with a cloud in his anger.—Before I dismiss this head of lay-exhorting, I would take notice of three things relating to it, upon which there ought to be a restraint.

1. Speaking in the time of the solemn worship of God; as public prayer, singing, or preaching, or administration of the Sacrament of the Holy Supper, or any duty of social worship. This should not be allowed. I know it will be said,

that in some cases, when persons are exceedingly affected, they cannot help it; and I believe so too; but then I also believe, and know by experience, that there are several things which contribute to that inability, besides merely and absolutely the sense of divine things upon their hearts. Custom and example, or the thing being allowed, have such an influence, that they actually help to make it impossible for persons under strong affections to avoid speaking. If it was disallowed, and persons at the time that they were thus disposed to break out, had this apprehension, that it would be very unbecoming for them so to do, it would contribute to their ability to avoid it. Their inability arises from their strong and vehement disposition; and, so far as that disposition is from a good principle, it would be weakened by this thought, *viz.* "What I am going to do, will be for the dishonour of Christ and religion." And so the inward vehemence, that pushed them forward to speak, would fall, and they would be enabled to avoid it. This experience confirms.

2. There ought to be a moderate restraint on the loudness of persons talking under high affections; for, if there be not, it will grow natural and unavoidable for persons to be louder and louder, without any increase of their inward sense; till it becomes natural to them, at last, to scream and halloo to almost every one they see in the Streets, when they are much affected. But this is certainly very improper, and what has no tendency to promote religion. The man Christ Jesus, when he was upon earth, had doubtless as great a sense of the infinite greatness and importance of eternal things, and the worth of souls, as any have now; but there is not the least appearance in his history, of his taking any such course, or manner of exhorting others.

3. There should also be some restraint on the abundance of talk, under strong affections; for, if persons give themselves an unbounded liberty to talk just so much as they feel an inclination to, they will increase and abound more and more in talk, beyond the proportion of their sense or affection; till at length it will become ineffectual on those that hear them, and, by the commonness of their abundant talk, they will defeat their own end.

SECT. VI.

Of errors connected with singing praises to God.

One thing more of which I would take notice, before I conclude this part, is the mis-management of singing praises to God. I believe it to have been one fruit of the extraordinary degrees of the sweet and joyful influence of the spirit of God, that there has appeared such a disposition to abound in this divine exercise; not only in appointed solemn meetings, but when Christians occasionally meet together at each other's Houses. But the mis-management I have respect to is a way of performing it, without almost any appearance of that reverence and solemnity with which all visible, open acts of divine worship ought to be attended. It may be two or three are in a room singing hymns of praise to God, others talking at the same time, others about their work, with little more appearance of regard to what is doing, than if only singing a common song for their amusement and diversion. There is danger, if such things are continued, that a mere nothing be made of this duty, to the great violation of the third Commandment. Let Christians abound as much as they will in this holy, heavenly exercise, in God's House and in their own Houses; but, let it be performed as an holy act, wherein they have immediately and visibly to do with God. When any social open act of devotion or solemn worship of God is performed, God should be reverenced as present. As we would not have the Ark of God depart from us, nor provoke God to make a breach upon us, we should take heed that we handle the Ark with reverence.

With respect to companies singing in the Streets, going to or coming from the place of public worship, I would humbly offer my thoughts in the following particulars:

1. The rule of Christ, concerning *putting new Wine into eld Bottles*, does undoubtedly take place in things of this nature, supposing the thing in itself is good, but not essential, and not particularly enjoined or forbidden. For things so very new and uncommon, and of so open and public a nature, to be suddenly introduced and set up and practised in many parts of the country, without the matter being so much as first proposed to any public consideration, or giving any opportunity

for the people of God to weigh the matter, or to consider any reasons that might be offered to support it, is putting new Wine into old Bottles with a witness; as if it were with no other design than to burst them directly. Nothing else can be expected to be the consequence of this, than uproar and confusion, great offence, and unhappy mischievous disputes, even among the children of God themselves. Not that what is good in itself, and is new, ought to be forborn, till there is no body that will like it; but it ought to be forborn till the visible Church of God is so prepared for it, at least, that there is a prabability it will not do more hurt than good, or hinder the work of God more than promote it; as is more evident from Christ's rule, and the apostles' practice. If it be brought in when the country is so unprepared, that the shock and surprise, the contention and prejudice against religion it is like to occasion, will do more to hinder religion, than the practise is like to promote it, then the fruit is picked before it is ripe. And, indeed, such a hasty endeavour to introduce an innovation, supposing it to be good in itself, is the likeliest way to retard the effectual introduction of it; it will hinder its being extensively introduced, much more than it will promote it, and so will defeat its own end. But,

2. As to the thing itself, if a considerable part of a congregation have occasion to go in company together to a place of public worship, and they should join together in singing praises to God, as they go, I confess, that after long consideration—and endeavouring to view the thing every way with the utmost deligence and impartiality I am capable of—I cannot find any valid objection against it. As to to the common objection from Mat. vi. 5. *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the Synagogues, and in the corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of men;* it is strong against a single person singing in the streets, or in the meeting-house by himself, as offering to God personal worship. But as it is brought against a considerable company, their thus publicly worshipping God, appears to me to have no weight at all; it is of no more force against a company's thus praising God in the streets, than against their praising him in the Synagogues, or Meeting-houses; for the streets and the Synagogues are both put together in these words of our Saviour, as parallel in the case. It is evident that Christ speaks of personal, and not public worship. If to sing in the streets be ostentatious, then it must be because it is a public place, and it cannot be done there without being very open; but it is no more public than the Synagogue or meeting-house

is when full of people. Some worship is in its nature private, as that which is proper to particular persons, or families, or private societies, and has respect to their particular concerns: but that which I now speak of, is performed under no other notion than a part of God's public worship, without any relation to any private, separate society, and in which every visible Christian has equal liberty to join, if it be convenient for him, and he has a disposition, as in the worship that is performed in the meeting-house. When persons are going to the house of public worship, to serve God there with the assembly of his people, they are upon no other design than that of putting public honour upon God; that is the business they go from home upon; and, even in their walking the streets on this errand, they appear in a public act of respect to God; and therefore, if they go in company with public praise, it is not being public when they ought to be private. It is one part of the beauty of public worship, that it be *very public;* the more public it is, the more open honour it puts upon God: and especially is it beautiful in *public praise;* for the very notion of publicly praising God, is to declare abroad his glory, to publish his praise, to make it known, and proclaim it aloud, as is evident by innumerable expressions of scripture. It is fit that God's honour should not be concealed, but made known in the great congregation, and proclaimed before the sun, and upon the house-tops, before kings and all nations, and that his praises should be heard to the utmost ends of the earth.

I suppose none will condemn singing God's praises, merely because it is performed in the open air; and, if it may be performed by a company in the open air, doubtless they may do it moving, as well as standing still. So the children of *Israel* praised God, when they went to Mount *Zion* with the Ark of God; and the multitude praised Christ, when they entered with him into *Jerusalem*, a little before his passion. The children of *Israel* were wont, from year to year, to go up to *Jerusalem* in companies, from all parts of the land, three times in the year, when they often used to manifest the engagedness of their minds by travelling all night, and manifested their joy and gladness by singing praises with great decency and beauty, as they went towards God's holy Mountain; as is evident by Isa. xxx. 29. *Ye shall have a song as in the night, when a holy solemnity is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the Mountain of the Lord, to the mighty one of* Israel. And Psal. xlii. 4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude, I*

went with them to the house of God; with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept Holy-day. Psal. c. 4. *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.* When God's people are going to his house, the occasion is so joyful to a Christian in a lively frame, that the duty of singing praises seems to be peculiarly beautiful on such an occasion. So that if the state of the country were ripe for it, and there should be frequent occasions for a considerable part of a congregation to go together to the places of public worship, and there was in other respects a proportionable appearance of fervency of devotion, it appears to me that it would be ravishingly beautiful, if such things were practised all over the land, and would have a great tendency to enliven, animate and rejoice the souls of God's Saints, and greatly to propagate vital religion. I believe the time is coming when the world will be full of such things.

3. It seems to me to be requisite that there should be the consent of the governing part of the worshipping societies, to which persons have joined themselves, and of which they own themselves a part, in order to the introducing of things in public worship, so new and uncommon, and not essential, nor particularly commanded, into the places where those worshipping societies belong. The peace and union of such societies seems to require it. They have voluntarily united themselves to these worshipping societies, to the end that they might be one in the affairs of God's public worship, and have obliged themselves in covenant to act as brethren, mutual assistants, and members of one body in those affairs. All are hereby naturally and necessarily led to be concerned with one another, in matters of religion and God's worship; and this is a part of the public worship, that must be performed from time to time in the view of the whole, being performed at a time when they are meeting together for mutual assistance in worship, and therefore that which all must unavoidably be in some measure concerned in, at least so as to shew their approbation and consent, or open dislike and separation from them in it. Hence charity, and a regard to the union and peace of such societies, seems to require a consent of the governing part, in order to the introducing any thing of this nature. Certainly if we are of the spirit of the apostle *Paul*, and have his discretion, we shall not set up any such practice without it. He, for the sake of peace, conformed in things wherein he was not particularly forbidden, to the *Jews* when among them; and so, when among those that were without the law, he conformed to them

wherein he might.——To be sure, those go much beyond proper limits, who, coming from abroad, do immediately of their own heads, in a strange place, set up such a new and uncommon practice among a people.

In introducing any thing of this nature among a people, their minister especially ought to be consulted, and his voice taken, as long as he is owned for their minister. Ministers are pastors of worshipping societies, and their heads and guides in the affairs of public worship. They are called in scripture, *those that rule over them;* and their people are commanded *to obey them, because they watch for their souls, as those that must give account.* If it belongs to these shepherds and rulers to direct and guide the flock in any thing at all, it belongs to them so to do in the circumstantials of their public worship.—Thus I have taken particular notice of many of those things that have appeared to me to be amiss in the management of our religious concerns relating to the present revival of religion, and have taken liberty freely to express my thoughts upon them. Upon the whole it appears manifest to me, that things have as yet never been set a-going in their right channel; if they had, and means had been blessed in proportion as they have been now, this work would have so prevailed, as before this time to have carried all before it, and have triumphed over *New-England* as its conquest.

The devil in driving things to these extremes, besides the present hindrance of the work of God, has, I believe, had in view a two-fold mischief, in the issue of things; one, with respect to those that are more cold in religion, to carry things to such an extreme in order that people in general, having their eyes opened by the great excess, might be tempted entirely to reject the whole work, as being all nothing but delusion and distraction. And another, with respect to those of God's children who have been very warm and zealous out of the way, to sink them down in unbelief and darkness. The time is coming, I doubt not, when the greater part of them will be convinced of their errors; and then probably the devil will take advantage to lead them into a dreadful wilderness, to puzzle and confound them about their own experiences, and the experiences of others; and to make them to doubt of many things that they ought not, and even to tempt them with atheistical thoughts. I believe, if all true Christians over the land should now at once have their eyes opened fully to see all their errors, it would seem for the present to damp religion. The dark thoughts that it would at first occasion, and the inward

doubts, difficulties and conflicts that would rise in their souls, would deaden their lively affections and joys, and would cause an appearance of a present decay of religion. But yet it would do God's saints great good in their latter end; it would fit them for more spiritual and excellent experiences, more humble and heavenly love, and unmixed joys, and would greatly tend to a more powerful, extensive and durable prevalence of vital piety. I do not know but we shall be in danger, after our eyes are fully opened to see our errors, to go to contrary extremes. The devil has driven the *pendulum* far beyond its proper point of rest; and when he has carried it to the utmost length that he can, and it begins by its own weight to swing back, he probably will set in, and drive it with the utmost fury the other way; and so give us no rest; and if possible prevent our settling in a proper medium. What a poor, blind, weak and miserable creature is man, at his best estate! We are like poor helpless sheep; the devil is too subtile for us. What is our strength! What is our wisdom! How ready are we to go astray! How easily are we drawn aside into innumerable snares, while in the mean time we are bold and confident, and doubt not but we are right and safe! We are foolish sheep in the midst of subtile serpents and cruel wolves, and do not know it. Oh how unfit are we to be left to ourselves! And how much do we stand in need of the wisdom, the power, the condescension, patience, forgiveness and gentleness of our good Shepherd!

PART V.

SHEWING POSITIVELY, WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE TO PROMOTE THIS WORK.

In considering means and methods for promoting this glorious work of God, I have already observed, in some instances, wherein there has been needless objecting and complaining; and have also taken notice of many things amiss, that ought to be amended. I now proceed, to shew positively, what ought to be done, or what courses (according to my humble opinion) ought to be taken to promote this work. The obligations that all are under, with one consent, to do their utmost,

and the great danger of neglecting it, were observed before.—I hope that some, upon reading what was said under that head, will be ready to say, What shall we do? To such readers I would now offer my thoughts, in answer to such an enquiry.

SECT. I.

We should endeavour to remove stumbling-blocks.

THAT which I think we ought to set ourselves about, in the first place, is to remove stumbling-blocks. When God is revealed as about to come gloriously to set up his kingdom in the world, this is proclaimed, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God*, Isa. xl. 3. And again, Isa. lvii. 14. *Cast ye up, cast ye up; prepare the way; take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.* And, chap. lxii. 10. *Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones.*

And, in order to this, there must be a great deal done at confessing of faults, on both sides. For undoubtedly many and great are the faults that have been committed, in the jangling and confusions, and mixtures of light and darkness, that have been of late. There is hardly any duty more contrary to our corrupt dispositions, and mortifying to the pride of man; but it must be done. Repentance of faults is, in a peculiar manner, a proper duty, when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, or when we especially expect or desire that it should come; as appears by *John* the *Baptist's* preaching. And if God does now loudly call upon us to repent, then he also calls upon us to make proper manifestations of our repentance. I am persuaded that those who have openly opposed this work, or have from time to time spoken lightly of it, cannot be excused in the sight of God, without openly confessing their fault therein; especially ministers. If they have any way, either directly or indirectly, opposed the work, or have so behaved, in their public performances or private conversation, as to prejudice the minds of their people against the work; if hereafter they shall be convinced of the goodness and divinity of what they have opposed, they ought by no means to palliate the matter, or excuse themselves, and pretend that they always thought so, and that it was only such and such imprudences that they

objected against. But they ought openly to declare their conviction, and condemn themselves for what they have done; for it is Christ that they have spoken against, in speaking lightly of and prejudicing others against this work; yea, it is the Holy Ghost. And though they have done it ignorantly and in unbelief, yet, when they find out who it is that they have opposed, undoubtedly God will hold them bound publicly to confess it.

And on the other side, if those who have been zealous to promote the work have in any of the fore-mentioned instances openly gone much out of the way, and done that which is contrary to Christian rules, whereby they have openly injured others, or greatly violated good order, and so done that which has wounded religion, they must publicly confess it, and humble themselves; as they would gather out the stones, and prepare the way of God's people. They who have laid great stumbling-blocks in others way, by their *open transgression*, are bound to remove them by their *open repentance*.

Some probably will be ready to object against this, that the opposers will take advantage by this to behave themselves insolently, and to insult both them and religion. And indeed, to the shame of some, they have taken advantage by such things; as of the good spirit that Mr. *Whitfield* shewed in his retractations, and some others. But if there are some imbittered enemies of religion, that stand ready to improve every thing to its disadvantage, yet that ought not to hinder doing an enjoined Christian duty; though it be in the manifestation of humility and repentance, after a fault openly committed. To stand it out, in a visible impenitence of a real fault, to avoid such an inconvenience, is to do evil in order to prevent evil. Besides, the danger of evil consequence is much greater on the other side: to commit sin, and then stand in it, is what will give the enemy the greatest advantage. For Christians to act like Christians, in openly humbling themselves when they have openly offended, in the end brings the greatest honour to Christ and religion; and in this way are persons most likely to have God appear for them.

Again, at such a day as this, God especially calls his people to the exercise of extraordinary meekness and mutual forbearance. Christ appears as it were coming in his kingdom, which calls for great moderation in our behaviour towards all men; Phil. iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men: The Lord is at hand.* The awe of the Divine Majesty, that appears present or approaching, should dispose us to it, and

deter us from the contrary. For us to be judging one another, and behaving with fierceness and bitterness one towards another, when he who is the searcher of all hearts, to whom we must all give an account, appears so remarkably present, is exceeding unsuitable. Our business at such a time should be at home, searching and condemning ourselves, and taking heed to our own behaviour. If there be glorious prosperity to the church of God approaching, those that are the most meek will have the largest share in it. For, when Christ *rides forth in his glory and his Majesty*, it is *because of truth, meekness and righteousness*, Psal. xlv. 3, 4. and, when God remarkably *arises to execute judgment*, it is *to save all the meek of the earth*, Psal. lxxvi. 9. and it is *the meek* that *shall increase their joy in the Lord*, Isa. xxix. 19. And, when the time comes that God will give this lower world into the hands of his Saints, it is *the meek that shall inherit the earth*. Psal. xxxvii. 11. and Mat. v. 9. *But with the froward, God will shew himself unsavoury.*

Those therefore that have been zealous for this work, and have greatly erred and been injurious with their zeal, ought not to be treated with bitterness. There is abundant reason to think, that most of them are the dear children of God, for whom Christ died; and therefore that they will see their error. As to those things, wherein we see them to be in an error, we have reason to say of them as the apostle, Phil. iii. 15. *If any are otherwise minded, God shall reveal this unto them.* Their errors should not be made use of to excite indignation towards them, but should influence all who hope we are the children of God, to humble ourselves, and become more entirely dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ, when we see those who are God's own people so ready to go astray. And those ministers who have been judged, and injuriously dealt with, will do the part of Christ's disciples, not to judge and revile again, but to receive such injuries with meekness and forbearance, and making a good improvement of them, more strictly examining their hearts and ways, and committing themselves to God. This will be the way to have God vindicate them in his providence, if they belong to him. We have not yet seen the end of things; nor do we know who will be most vindicated, and honoured of God, in the issue. Eccl. vii. 8. *Better is the end of a thing, than the beginning thereof; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.*—Contrary to this mutual meekness, is each party's stigmatizing one another

with odious names, as is done in many parts of *New-England*; which tends greatly to widen and perpetuate the breach. Such distinguishing names of reproach do as it were divide us into two armies, separated, and drawn up in battle-array; which greatly hinders the work of God.

And as such an extraordinary time as this does especially require of us the exercise of great forbearance *one towards another*; so there is peculiarly requisite in God's people the exercise of great patience, in waiting *on God*, under any special difficulties and disadvantages they may be under as to the means of grace. The beginning of a revival of religion will naturally and necessarily be attended with a great many difficulties of this nature; many parts of the reviving church will, for a while be under great disadvantages, by reason of what remains of the old disease, of a general corruption of the visible church. We cannot expect that, after a long time of degeneracy and depravity in the state of things in the church, all should come to rights at once; it must be a work of time. And for God's people to be over-hasty and violent, in such a case, being resolved to have every thing rectified at once, or else forcibly to deliver themselves by breaches and separations, is the way to hinder things coming to rights as they otherwise would. It is the way to keep them back, and to break all in pieces. Indeed the difficulty may be so intolerable as to allow of no delay, and God's people cannot continue in the state wherein they were, without violations of God's absolute commands: But otherwise, though the difficulty may be very great, another course should be taken. God's people should have recourse directly to the Throne of Grace, to represent their difficulties before the great Shepherd of the sheep, who has the care of all the affairs of his church; and, when they have done, they should wait patiently upon him. If they do so, they may expect that in his time he will appear for their deliverance: but if, instead of that, they are impatient, and take the work into their own hands, they will betray their want of faith, will dishonour God, and have reason to fear that he will leave them to manage their affairs for themselves as well as they can. If they had waited on Christ patiently, continuing still instant in prayer, they might have had him appearing for them, much more effectually to deliver them. *He that believeth shall not make haste.* And it is for those that are found patiently waiting on the Lord, under difficulties, that he will especially appear, when he comes to do great things for his church; as

is evident by Isa. xxx. 18. Chap. xl. at the latter end, and xlix. 23. and Psal. xxxvii. 9. and many other places.

I have somewhere, not long since, met with an exposition of those words of the spouse, several times repeated in the book of *Canticles, I charge you, O daughters of* Jerusalem, *that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.* It was the only satisfying exposition that ever I met with, and was to this purpose, *viz.* That when the church of God is under great difficulties, and in distress, and Christ does not appear for her help, but seems to neglect her, as though he were asleep, God's people, or the daughters of *Jerusalem*, in such a case, should not shew an hasty spirit, and, not having patience to wait for Christ to awake for their help till his time comes, take indirect courses for their own deliverance, and use violent means for their escape, before Christ appears to open the door for them; and so, as it were, *stir up, and awake Christ*, before his time. When the church is in distress, and God seems not to appear for her in his Providence, he is very often represented in Scripture as being asleep; as Christ was asleep in the Ship, when the disciples were tossed by the storm, and the Ship covered with waves. And God's appearing for his people's help, is represented as his awaking out of sleep, Psal. vii. 6. xxxv. 23. xliv. 23. lix. 4. lxxiii. 20. Christ has an appointed time for his thus awaking out of sleep; and his people ought to wait upon him, and not, in an impatient fit, stir him up before his time. It is worthy to be observed, how strict this charge is, given to the daughters of *Jerusalem*; it is repeated three times over in the book of *Canticles*, chap. ii. 7.—iii. 5.—viii. 4. In the 2d chapter and six first verses, are represented the supports Christ gives his church, while she is in a suffering state, *as the lily among thorns.* In the 7th verse is represented her patience in waiting for Christ, to appear for her deliverance, when she charges the daughters of *Jerusalem* not to stir up, nor awake her love till he please, *by the Roes, and the Hinds of the field*; which are creatures of a gentle, harmless nature. They are not beasts of prey, do not devour one another, do not fight with their enemies, but flee from them; and are of a pleasant, loving nature, Prov. v. 19. In the next verse, we see the church's success, in this way of waiting under sufferings, with meekness and patience; Christ soon awakes, speedily appears, and swiftly comes; *The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the Mountains, skipping upon the Hills!*

SECT. II.

What must be done more directly to advance this Work.

WHAT has been mentioned hitherto, has relation to the behaviour we are obliged to, as we would prevent the hindrances of the work; but, besides these, there are things that must be *done*, more directly to advance it. And here it concerns every one, in the first place, to look into his own heart, and see to it that he be a partaker of the benefits of the work himself, and that it be promoted in his own soul. Now is a most glorious opportunity for the good of souls. It is manifestly with respect to a time of great revival of religion in the world, that we have that gracious, earnest and moving invitation proclaimed in the 55th of Isa. *Ho, every one that thirsteth*, &c. as is evident by the foregoing chapter, and what follows in the close of this. In the 6th verse, it is said, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.* And it is with special reference to such a time, that Christ proclaims as he does, Rev. xxi. 6. *I will give unto him that is athirst, of the Fountain of the Water of life freely.* And chap. xxii. 17. *And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come: And whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.* And it seems to be with reference to such a time, which is typified by the *Feast of Tabernacles*, that Jesus, at that Feast, stood and cried, as we have an account, John vii. 37, 38. *In the last Day, that great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any Man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of living Water.* And it is with special reference to God's freeness and readiness to bestow grace at such a time, that it is said in Isa. lx. 11. of the spiritual *Jerusalem, Thy Gates shall be open continually, they shall not be shut, Day nor Night.*

And though I judge not those who have opposed this work, and would not have others judge them, yet, if any such shall happen to read this treatise, I would take the liberty to intreat them to leave off troubling themselves so much about others, and to look into their own souls, and see to it that they are the subjects of a true, saving work of the Spirit of God.—If they have reason to think they never have been, or if it be but a very doubtful hope that they have, then how can they

have any heart to be fiercely engaged about the mistakes and the supposed false hopes of others? And I would now beseech those who have hitherto been somewhat inclining to *Arminian* principles, seriously to weigh the matter with respect to this work, and consider, whether, if the scriptures are the word of God, the work that has been described in the first part of this treatise must not be, as to the substance of it, the work of God, and the flourishing of that religion which is taught by Christ and his apostles. Can any good medium be found, where a man can rest with any stability, between owning this work, and being a deist? If indeed this be the work of God, does it not entirely overthrow their scheme of religion; and does it not infinitely concern them, as they would be partakers of eternal salvation, to relinquish their scheme? Now is a good time for *Arminians* to change their principles. I would now, as one of the friends of this work, humbly invite them to come and join with us, and be on our side; and, if I had the authority of *Moses*, I would say to them as he did to *Hobab*, Num. x. 29. *We are journeying unto the place, of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good: For the Lord hath spoken good concerning* Israel.

As the benefit and advantage of the good improvement of such a season is very great, so the danger of neglecting and misimproving it is proportionably great. It is abundantly evident by the scripture, that as a time of great outpouring of the spirit is a time of great favour to those who are partakers of the blessing, so it is always a time of remarkable vengeance to others. So in Isa. lxi. 2. what is called, *the acceptable year of the Lord*, is called also, *the day of vengeance of our God*. So it was amongst the *Jews*, in the apostles' days. The apostle in 2 Cor. vi. 2. says of that time, that it was *the accepted time, and day of salvation;* and Christ says of the same time, Luke xxi. 22. *These are the days of vengeance.* While the blessings of the kingdom of heaven were given to some, there was an *ax laid at the root of the trees, that those that did not bear fruit, might be hewn down, and cast into the fire,* Mat. iii. 9—11. Then was glorified both the goodness and severity of God, in a remarkable manner, Rom. xi. 22. The harvest and the vintage go together: At the same time that the earth is reaped, and God's elect are gathered into his garner, *the angel that has power over fire, thrusts in his sickle, and gathers the cluster of the vine of the earth, and casts it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God,* Rev. xiv. So it is foretold, in reference to the beginning of the glorious times

of the Christian church, that as *the hand of the Lord is known towards his servants, so shall his indignation be towards his enemies*, Isa. lxvi. 14. So when that glorious morning shall appear, wherein *the sun of righteousness shall arise to the elect with healing in his wings, the day shall burn as an oven to the wicked*, Mal. iv. 1—3. There is no time like it for the increase of guilt, and treasuring up wrath, and desperate hardening of the heart, if men stand it out; which is the most awful judgment, and fruit of divine wrath, that can be inflicted on any mortal. So that a time of great grace, and the fruits of divine mercy, is evermore also a time of divine vengeance, on those that neglect and misimprove such a season.

The state of the present revival of religion has an awful aspect upon those that are advanced in years. The work has been chiefly amongst the young; and comparatively but few others have been made partakers of it. And indeed it has commonly been so, when God has begun any great work for the revival of his church; he has taken the young people, and has cast off the old and stiff-necked generation. There was a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God on the children of *Israel* in the wilderness, but chiefly on the younger generation, *their little ones, that they said should be a prey*, the generation that entered into *Canaan* with *Joshua*. That generation seems to have been the most excellent that ever was in the church of *Israel*. There is no generation, of which there is so much good, and so little evil spoken in scripture, as might be shewn. In that generation, such as were under twenty years when they went out of *Egypt*, was that *kindness of youth*, and *love of espousals*, spoken of, Jer. ii. 2, 3. But the old generation were passed by; they remained obstinate and stiff-necked, were always murmuring, and would not be convinced by all God's wondrous works that they beheld—God by his awful judgments executed in the wilderness, and the affliction which the people suffered there, convinced and humbled the younger generation, and fitted them for great mercy; as is evident by Deut. ii. 16. but he destroyed the old generation; *he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness.* When it was a time of great mercy, and of God's Spirit on their children, it was remarkably a day of vengeance unto them; as appears by the 90th Psalm. Let the old generation in this land take warning from hence, and take heed that they do not refuse to be convinced by all God's wonders that he works before their eyes, and that they do not continue for ever object-

ing, murmuring and cavilling against the work of God, lest, while he is bringing their children into a land flowing with milk and honey, he should swear in his wrath concerning them, that their carcasses shall fall in the wilderness.

So when God had a design of great mercy to the *Jews*, in bringing them out of the *Babylonish* captivity, and returning them to their own land, there was a blessed outpouring of the spirit upon them in *Babylon*, to bring them to deep conviction and repentance, and to cry earnestly to God for mercy; which is often spoken of by the prophets. But it was not upon the *old* generation, that were carried captive. The captivity continued just long enough for that perverse generation to waste away and die in their captivity, at least those of them that were adult persons when carried captive. The heads of families were exceeding obstinate, and would not hearken to the earnest repeated warnings of the prophet *Jeremiah;* but he had greater success among the young people; as appears by Jer. vi. 10, 11. *To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: Behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of the young men together: For even the husband with the wife* (i. e. the heads of families, and parents of these children) *shall be taken, the aged, with him that is full of days.* Blessed be God! there are some of the elder people that have been made partakers of this work. And those that are most awakened by these warnings of God's word, and the awful frowns of his providence, will be most likely to be made partakers hereafter. It infinitely concerns them to take heed to themselves, that they may be partakers of it; for how dreadful will it be to go to hell, after having spent so many years in doing nothing but treasuring up wrath!

But above all others does it concern us who are ministers to see to it that we have experience of the saving operations of the same spirit that is now poured out on the land. How sorrowful and melancholy is the case, when it is otherwise! For one to stand at the head of a congregation of God's people, as representing Christ and speaking in his stead; and to act the part of a shepherd and guide to a people in such a state of things, when many are under great awakenings, many are converted, and many of God's saints are filled with divine light, love and joy: to undertake to instruct and lead them all under

these various circumstances; to be put to it continually to play the hypocrite, and force the airs of a saint in preaching; and, from time to time in private conversation, and particular dealing with souls, to undertake to judge of their circumstances: to try to talk with persons of experience, as if he knew how to converse with them, and had experience as well as they; to make others believe that he rejoices when others are converted; and to force a pleased and joyful countenance and manner of speech, when there is nothing in the heart: What sorrowful work is here! Oh how miserable must such a person feel! What a wretched bondage and slavery is this! What pains, and how much art must such a minister use to conceal himself! And how weak are his hands! What infinite provocation of the most high God, and displeasure of his Lord and master, he incurs, by continuing a secret enemy to him in his heart, in such circumstances. I think there is a great deal of reason from the scripture to conclude, that no sort of men in the world will be so low in hell as ungodly ministers. Every thing spoken of in scripture, as that which aggravates guilt, and heightens divine wrath, meets in them. And what great disadvantages are unconverted ministers under, to oppose any irregularities, imprudences, or intemperate zeal, which they may see in those who are the children of God, when they are conscious to themselves that they have no zeal at all? If enthusiasm and wildness comes in like a flood, what poor weak instruments are such ministers to withstand it? With what courage can they open their mouths, when they look inward, and consider how it is with them?

We who are ministers, not only have need of some true experience of the saving influence of the spirit of God upon our heart, but we need a double portion at such a time as this. We need to be as full of light as a Glass that is held out in the Sun; and, with respect to love and zeal, we need to be like the angels, who are a flame of fire. The state of the times extremely requires a fulness of the divine spirit in ministers, and we ought to give ourselves no rest till we have obtained it. And, in order to this, I should think ministers, above all persons, ought to be much in prayer and fasting, both in secret and one with another. It seems to me, that it would become the circumstances of the present day, if ministers in a neighbourhood would often meet together, and spend days in fasting and fervent prayer among themselves, earnestly seeking extraordinary supplies of divine grace from heaven. And how desirable that, on their occasional visits one to another, instead of spending

away their time in sitting and smoking, in diverting, or worldly, unprofitable conversation—telling news, and making their remarks on this and the other trifling subject—they would spend their time in praying together, singing praises, and religious Conference. How much do many of the common people shame many of us who are in the work of the ministry, in these respects? Surely we do not behave ourselves so much like Christian ministers, and the disciples and ambassadors of Christ, as we ought to do. And, while we condemn zealous persons for censuring ministers at this day, it ought not to be without deep reflections upon, and great condemnation of ourselves; for indeed we do very much to provoke censoriousness, and lay a great temptation before others to the sin of judging. And if we can prove that those who are guilty of it transgress the scripture-rule, our indignation should be chiefly against ourselves.

Ministers, at this day in a special manner, should act as fellow-helpers in their great work. It should be seen that they are animated and engaged, that they exert themselves with one heart and soul, and with united strength, to promote the present glorious revival of religion; and to that end should often meet together, and act in concert. And if it were a common thing in the country, for ministers to join in public exercises, and second one another in their preaching, I believe it would be of great service. I mean that ministers, having consulted one another as to their subjects before they go to the house of God, should there (two or three of them) in short discourses earnestly enforce each other's warnings and counsels. Such appearance of united zeal in ministers would have a great tendency to awaken attention, and to impress and animate the hearers; as has been found by experience in some parts of the country.—Ministers should carefully avoid weakning one another's hands: and therefore every thing should be avoided, by which their interest with their people might be diminished, or their union with them broken. Therefore, if ministers have not forfeited their acceptance in that character in the visible church, by their doctrine or behaviour, their brethren in the ministry ought studiously to endeavour to heighten the esteem and affection of their people towards them, that they may have no temptation to repent their admitting other ministers to preach in their pulpits.

Two things exceeding needful in ministers, as they would do any great matters to advance the kingdom of Christ, are *zeal*

and *resolution*. Their influence and power, to bring to pass great effects, is greater than can well be imagined. A man of but an ordinary capacity will do more with them, than one of ten times the parts and learning without them; more may be done with them in a few days, or at least weeks, than can be done without them in many years. Those who are possessed of these qualities commonly carry the day, in almost all affairs. Most of the great things that have been done in the world, the great revolutions that have been accomplished in the kingdoms and empires of the earth, have been chiefly owing to them. The very appearance of a thoroughly engaged spirit, together with a fearless courage and unyielding resolution, in any person that has undertaken the managing of any affair amongst mankind, goes a great way towards accomplishing the effect aimed at. It is evident that the appearance of these in *Alexander* did three times as much towards his conquering the world, as all the blows that he struck. And how much were the great things that *Oliver Cromwel* did, owing to these? And the great things that Mr. *Whitfield* has done, every where, as he has run through the *British* dominions (so far as they are owing to means) are very much owing to the appearance of these things which he is eminently possessed of. When the people see these in a person, to a great degree, it awes them, and has a commanding influence upon their minds. It seems to them that they must yield; they naturally fall before them, without standing to contest or dispute the matter; they are conquered as were by surprise. But while we are cold and heartless, and only go on in a dull manner, in an old formal round, we shall never do any great matters. Our attempts, with the appearance of such coldness and irresolution, will not so much as make persons think of yielding. They will hardly be sufficient to put it into their minds; and if it be put into their minds, the appearance of such indifference and cowardice does as it were call for and provoke opposition.—Our misery is want of zeal and courage; for not only through want of them does all fail that we seem to attempt, but it prevents our *attempting* any thing very remarkable for the kingdom of Christ. Hence oftentimes, when any thing very considerable is proposed to be done for the advancement of religion or the public good, many difficulties are in the way, and a great many objections are started, and it may be it is put off from one to another; but no body does any thing. And after this manner good designs or proposals have often failed, and have sunk as soon as proposed. When as, if we had but Mr. *Whitfield's* zeal and courage,

what could not we do, with such a blessing as we might expect?

Zeal and courage will do much in persons of but an ordinary capacity; but especially would they do great things, if joined with great abilities. If some great men who have appeared in our nation, had been as eminent in divinity as they were in philosophy, and had engaged in the Christian cause with as much zeal and fervour as some others have done, and with a proportional blessing of heaven, they would have conquered all *Christendom*, and turned the world upside down. We have many ministers in the land that do not want abilities, they are persons of bright parts and learning; they should consider how much is expected and will be required of them by their Lord and Master, how much they might do for Christ, and what great honour and glorious a reward they might receive, if they had in their hearts an heavenly warmth, and divine heat proportionable to their light.

With respect to candidates for the ministry, I will not undertake particularly to determine what kind of examination or trial they should pass under, in order to their admission to that sacred work. But I think this is evident from the scripture, that another sort of trial with regard to their virtue and piety is requisite, than is required in order to persons being admitted into the visible church. The apostle directs, *that hands be laid suddenly on no man;* but that they should *first be tried*, before they are admitted to the work of the ministry; but it is evident that persons were suddenly admitted by baptism into the visible church, on profession of their faith in Christ, without such caution or strictness in their probation. And it seems to me, those would act very unadvisedly, that should enter on that great and sacred work, before they had comfortable satisfaction concerning themselves, that they have had a saving work of God on their souls.

And though it may be thought that I go out of my proper sphere, to intermeddle in the affairs of the colleges; yet I will take the liberty of an *Englishman* that speaks his mind freely concerning public affairs, and the liberty of a minister of Christ (who doubtless may speak his mind as freely about things that concern the kingdom of his Lord and Master) to give my opinion, in some things, with respect to those societies; the original and main design of which is to train up persons, and fit them for the work of the ministry. And I would say in general, that it appears to me care should be taken, some way or other, that those societies should be so regulated, that they should,

in fact, be nurseries of piety. Otherwise they are fundamentally ruined and undone as to their main design and most essential end. They ought to be so constituted, that vice and idleness should have no living there. They are intolerable in societies, whose main design is, to train up youth in Christian knowledge and eminent piety, to fit them to be pastors of the flock of the blessed Jesus. I have heretofore had some acquaintance with the affairs of a college, and experience of what belonged to its tuition and government; and I cannot but think that it is practicable enough, so to constitute such societies, that there should be no residing there, without being virtuous, serious and diligent. It seems to me a reproach to the land, that ever it should be so with our colleges, that, instead of being places of the greatest advantages for true piety, one cannot send a child thither without great danger of his being infected as to his morals. It is perfectly intolerable; and any thing should be done, rather than it should be so. If we pretend to have any colleges at all, under any notion of training up youth for the ministry, there should be some way found out, that should certainly prevent its being thus. To have societies for bringing persons up to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and to lead souls to heaven, and to have them places of so much infection, is the greatest nonsense and absurdity imaginable.

And as thorough and effectual care should be taken that vice and idleness be not tolerated in these societies, so certainly their design requires that extraordinary means should be used in them for training up the students in vital religion, and experimental and practical Godliness; so that they should be holy societies, the very place should be as it were sacred. They should be, in the midst of the land, fountains of piety and holiness. There is a great deal of pains taken to teach the scholars human learning; there ought to be as much and more care thoroughly to educate them in religion, and lead them to true and eminent holiness. If the main design of these nurseries is to bring up persons to teach Christ, then it is of the greatest importance that there should be care and pains taken to bring those who are there educated to the knowledge of Christ. It has been common in our public prayers, to call these societies, *the Schools of the Prophets;* and, if they are schools to train up young men to be *Prophets*, certainly there ought to be extraordinary care taken to train them up to be *Christians*.—And I cannot see why it is not on all accounts fit and convenient for the governors and instructors of the colleges

particularly, singing, and frequently, to converse with the students about the state of their souls; as is the practice of the Rev. Dr. *Doddridge*, one of the most noted of the present dissenting ministers in *England*, who keeps an academy at *Northampton*, as he himself informs the Rev. Mr. *Wadsworth* of *Hartford* in *Connecticut*, in a letter dated at *Northampton*, *March* 6th, 1741. The original of which letter I have seen, and have by me an extract of it, sent me by Mr. *Wadsworth*; which is as follows:

"Through the divine goodness, I have every year the pleasure to see some plants taken out of my nursery, and set in neighbouring congregations; where they generally settle with an unanimous consent, and that to a very remarkable degree, in some very large and once divided congregations. A circumstance in which I own and adore the hand of a wise and gracious God; and cannot but look upon it as a token for good. I have at present a greater proportion of pious and ingenious youth under my care, than I ever before had: so that I hope the church may reasonably expect some considerable relief from hence, if God spare their lives a few years, and continue to them those gracious assistances which he has hitherto mercifully imparted.—I will not, *Sir*, trouble you at present with a large account of my method of academical education: only would observe, that I think it of vast importance to instruct them carefully in the scriptures; and not only endeavour to establish them in the great truths of christianity, but to labour to promote their practical influence on their hearts. For which purpose, I frequently converse with each of them alone, and conclude the conversation with prayer. This does indeed take up a great deal of time; but, I bless God, it is amply repaired in the pleasure I have in seeing my labour is not in vain in the Lord."

There are some who are not ministers, nor are concerned immediately in those things that appertain to their office, or in the education of persons for it, who are under great advantages to promote such a glorious work as this. Some lay-men though it be not their business publicly to exhort and teach, are in some respects under greater advantage to encourage and forward this work than ministers; as particularly great men, or those who are high in honour and influence. How much might such do to encourage religion, and open the way for it to have free course, and bear down opposition, if they were but inclined! There is commonly a certain unhappy shyness in great men with respect to religion, as though they were ashamed of it,

or at least ashamed to do much at it; whereby they dishonour and doubtless greatly provoke the King of Kings, and very much wound religion among the common people. They are careful of their honour, and seem to be afraid of appearing openly forward and zealous in religion, as though it were what would debase their character, and expose them to contempt.—But, in this day of bringing up the Ark, they ought to be like *David*, that great king of *Israel*, who *made himself vile* before the Ark; and as he was the highest in honour and dignity among God's people, so he thought it became him to appear foremost in the zeal and activity manifested on that occasion; thereby animating and encouraging the whole congregation to praise the Lord, and rejoice before him with all their might. And though it diminished him in the eyes of scoffing *Michal*, yet it did not at all abate the honour and esteem of the congregation of *Israel*, but advanced it; as appears by 2 Sam. vi. 22.

Rich men have a talent in their hands, in the disposal and improvement of which they might very much promote such a work as this, if they were so disposed. They are far beyond others in advantages to do good, and lay up for themselves treasures in heaven. What a thousand pities it is that, for want of a heart, they commonly have no share at all there, but heaven is peopled mostly with the poor of this world! One would think that our rich men who call themselves christians, might devise some notable things to do with their money, to advance the kingdom of their professed Redeemer, and the prosperity of the souls of men, at this time of such extraordinary advantage for it. It seems to me, that in this age most of us have but very narrow, penurious notions of Christianity, as it respects our use and disposal of our temporal goods. The primitive Christians had not such notions; they were trained up by the apostles in another way.—God has greatly distinguished some of the inhabitants of *New-England* from others, in the abundance he has given them of the good things of this life. If they could now be persuaded to lay out some considerable part of that which God has given them for his honour, and lay it up in heaven, instead of spending it for their own honour, or laying it up for their posterity, they would not repent of it afterwards. How liberally did the heads of the tribes contribute of their wealth at the setting up the tabernacle, though it was in a barren wilderness? These are the days of erecting the tabernacle of God amongst us. We have a particular account how the goldsmiths and the merchants helped to

rebuild the wall of *Jerusalem*, Neh. iii. 32. The days are coming, and I believe not very far off, when the sons of *Zion shall come from far, bringing their Silver and their Gold with them, unto the name of the Lord their God, and to the holy One of* Israel; when the merchants of the earth shall trade for Christ, more than for themselves, and *their merchandize and hire shall be holiness to the Lord, and shall not be treasured or laid up for posterity, but shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing*; when *the ships of* Tarshish *shall bring* the wealth of the distant parts of the earth *to the place of God's sanctuary, and to make the place of his feet glorious*; and *the abundance of the sea shall be converted to the use of God's church, and she shall suck the milk of the Gentiles, and suck the breasts of Kings.* The days are coming, when the great and rich men of the world *shall bring their honour and glory into the church*, and shall, as it were, strip themselves in order to spread their garments under Christ's feet, as he enters triumphantly into *Jerusalem*; and when those that will not do so shall have no glory, and their silver and gold shall be cankered, and their garments moth-eaten. For the Saints shall then inherit the earth, and they shall reign on it; and those that honour God he will honour, and those that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.—If some of our rich men would give one quarter of their estates to promote this work, they would act a little as if they were designed for the kingdom of heaven, and as rich men will act by and by who shall be partakers of the spiritual wealth and glories of that kingdom.

Great things might be done for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ at this day by those who have ability, by establishing *funds* for the support and propagation of religion; by supporting some who are eminently qualified with gifts and grace in *preaching the gospel* in certain parts of the country, which are more destitute of the means of grace; by searching out children of promising abilities and their hearts full of love to Christ, but of poor families, (as doubtless there are such now in the land) and *bringing them up for the ministry*; and by *distributing books*, that are remarkably fitted to promote vital religion, and have a great tendency to advance this work.—Or if they would only bear the trouble and expence of sending such books into various parts of the land to be *sold*, it might be an occasion that ten times so many of those books should be bought, as otherwise would be—by establishing and supporting *schools* in poor towns and villages; which might be done on such a foundation, as not only to bring up children in common learn-

ing, but also might very much tend to their conviction and conversion, and being trained up in vital piety. Doubtless something might be done this way in old towns and more populous places, that might have a great tendency to the flourishing of religion in the rising generation.

SECT. III.

Of some particulars that concern all in general.

And here, the first thing I shall mention is *fasting and prayer*. It seems to me, that the circumstances of the present work loudly call upon God's people to abound in this; whether they consider their own *experience*, or the riches of God's *grace*. God has lately given them an experience of the worth of his presence, and of the blessed fruits of the effusions of his spirit, to excite them to pray for the continuance, increase, and greater extent of such blessings; and they have great encouragement to pray for the out-pouring of his spirit, and the carrying on of this work, by the great manifestations he has lately made of the freeness and riches of his grace. There is much in what we have seen of the glorious works of God's power and grace, to put us in mind of the yet greater things of this nature that he has spoken of in his word, and to excite our longings, and our hopes of their approach. Beside, we should consider the great opposition that *Satan* makes against this work, the many difficulties with which it is clogged, and the distressing circumstances that some parts of God's church in this land are under at this day, on one account and another.

So is God's will, through his wonderful grace, that the prayers of his Saints should be one great and principal means of carrying on the designs of Christ's kingdom in the world. When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is his will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of his people; as is manifest by Ezek. xxxvi. 37. *I will yet, for this, be enquired of by the house of* Israel, *to do it for them:* (see the context.) And it is revealed that, when God is about to accomplish great things for his church, he will begin by remarkably pouring out the spirit of grace and supplication, Zech. xii. 10. If we are not to expect that the devil should go out of a particular person, under a bodily possession, without extraordinary prayer, *or prayer and fasting;* how much

less should we expect to have him cast out of the land, and the world, without it?

I am sensible that somewhat considerable has been done in duties of this nature in some places, but I do not think so much as God in the present dispensations of his providence calls for. I should think the people of God in this land, at such a time as this is, would be in the way of their duty while doing three times as much at fasting and prayer as they do; not only, nor principally, for the pouring out of the spirit on those places to which they belong; but that God would appear for his church, and, in mercy to miserable men, carry on his work in the land, and in the world, and fulfil the things he has spoken of in his word, that his church has been so long wishing and hoping and waiting for. *They that make mention of the Lord*, at this day, ought not to *keep silence*, and should *give God no rest, till he establish, and till he make* Jerusalem *a praise in the earth*; agreeable to Isa. lxii. 6, 7. Before the first great outpouring of the spirit of God on the Christian church, which began at *Jerusalem*, the disciples gave themselves to incessant prayer, Acts i. 13, 14. There is a time spoken of, wherein God will remarkably and wonderfully appear for the deliverance of his church from all her enemies, and when he will *avenge his own Elect*: And Christ reveals that this will be in answer to their incessant prayers, or *crying Day and Night*, Luke xviii. 7. In *Israel*, the *day of atonement* which was their great day of fasting and prayer, preceded and made way for the glorious and joyful *feast of tabernacles*. When Christ is mystically born into the world, to rule over all nations, it is represented in the 12th chap. of Rev. as being in consequence of the church's *crying, and travailing in birth, and being pained to be delivered*. One thing here intended doubtless is, her crying and agonizing in prayer.

God seems at this very time to be waiting for this from us. When he is about to bestow some great blessing on his church, it is often his manner, in the first place, so to order things in his providence, as to shew his church their great need of it, and to bring them into distress for want of it, and so put them upon crying earnestly to him for it. Let us consider God's present dispensations towards his church in this land: a glorious work of his grace has been begun and carried on; and he has of late suffered innumerable difficulties to arise, that in a great measure clog and hinder it, and bring many of God's dear children into great distress. And yet he does not wholly forsake the work

of his hand; there are remarkable tokens of his presence still to be seen, here and there; as though he was not forward to forsake us, and (if I may so say) as though he had a mind to carry on his work, but only was waiting for something that he expected in us, as requisite in order to it. And we have a great deal of reason to think, that one thing at least is, that we should further acknowledge the greatness and necessity of such a mercy, and our dependence on God for it, in earnest and importunate prayers to him. And by the many errors that have been run into, by the wounds we have thereby given ourselves and the cause that we would promote, and the mischief and confusion we have thereby made, God has hitherto been remarkably shewing us our great and universal dependence on him, and exceeding need of his help and grace; which should engage our cries to him for it.

There is no way that Christians in a private capacity can do so much to promote the work of God, and advance the kingdom of Christ, as by prayer. By this even women, children and servants may have a public influence. Let persons in other respects be never so weak, and never so mean, and under never so poor advantages to do much for Christ and the souls of men; yet, if they have much of the spirit of grace and supplication, in this way they may have power with him who is infinite in power, and has the government of the whole world. A poor man in his cottage may have a blessed influence all over the world. God is, if I may so say, at the command of the prayer of faith; and in this respect is, as it were, under the power of his people; *as Princes, they have power with God, and prevail.* Though they may be private persons, their prayers are put up in the name of a Mediator who is a public person, being the head of the whole church, and the Lord of the universe. If they have a great sense of the importance of eternal things, and a concern for the precious souls of men, they need not regret it that they are not preachers; they may go in their earnestness and agonies of soul, and pour out their souls before one who is able to do all things. Before him they may speak as freely as ministers; they have a great high priest, through whom they may come boldly at all times, and may vent themselves before a prayer-hearing father without restraint.

If the people of God at this day, instead of spending time in fruitless disputing, in talking about opposers, judging them, and animadverting upon the unreasonableness of their talk and behaviour, and its inconsistence with true experience, would be more silent in this way, and open their mouths much more before God, and spend more time in fasting and prayer, they

would be more in the way of a blessing. And if some Christians who have been complaining of their ministers, and struggling in vain to deliver themselves from the difficulties complained of under their ministry, had said and acted less before men, and had applied themselves with all their might to cry to God for their ministers, had as it were risen and stormed heaven with their humble, fervent and incessant prayers for them, they would have been much more in the way of success.

God in his providence appearing in the present state of things, does especially call on his people in *New-England* to be very much in praying to him for the pouring out of the spirit upon *ministers* in the land. For though it is not for us to determine concerning particular ministers, how much they have of the spirit of God; yet in the general it is apparent, that there is at this day need of very great degrees of the presence of God with the ministry in *New-England*, much greater degrees of it than has hitherto been granted; they need it for themselves, and the church of God stands in extreme need of it.

On days of fasting and prayer, wherein the whole congregation is concerned, if the day, besides what is spent in our families, was not wholly spent in the meeting-house, but part of it in particular praying companies or societies, it would have a tendency to animate and engage devotion, more than if the whole day were spent in public, where the people are no way active themselves in the worship, any otherwise than as they join with the minister. The inhabitants of many of our towns are now divided into particular praying societies; most of the people, young and old, have voluntarily associated themselves in distinct companies, for mutual assistance in social worship, in private houses. What I intend therefore is, that days of prayer should be spent partly in these distinct praying companies. Such a method as *this*, has been several times proved, *viz.* In the forenoon, after the duties of the family and closet, as early as might be, all the people of the congregation have gathered in their particular religious societies; companies of men by themselves, and companies of women by themselves; young men by themselves, and young women by themselves; and companies of children in all parts of the town by themselves, as many as were capable of social religious exercises; the boys by themselves, and the girls by themselves: and about the middle of the day, at an appointed hour, all have met together in the house of God, to offer up public prayers, and to hear a sermon suitable to the occasion; and then, they have retired

from the house of God again into their private sosieties, and spent the remaining part of the day in praying together there, excepting so much as was requisite for the duties of the family and closet in their own houses.—And it has been found to be of great benefit, to assist and engage the minds of the people in the duties of the day.

I have often thought it would be very desirable, and very likely to be followed with a great blessing, if there could be some contrivance for an agreement of all God's people in *America*, who are well-affected to this work, to keep a day of fasting and prayer; wherein we should all unite on the same day, in humbling ourselves before God for our past long-continued lukewarmness and unprofitableness; not omitting humiliation for the errors that so many of God's people—tho' zealously affected towards this work—through their infirmity and remaining blindness and corruption have run into: and together with thanksgivings to God for so glorious and wonderful a display of his power and grace in the late out-pourings of his spirit, to address the Father of mercies, with prayers and supplications, and earnest cries, that he would guide and direct his own people, and that he would continue and still carry on this work, and more abundantly and extensively pour out his spirit, and particularly upon ministers; and that he would bow the heavens and come down, and erect his glorious kingdom through the earth.—Some perhaps may think that its being all on the same day, is a circumstance of no great consequence; but I cannot be of that mind. Such a circumstance makes the union and agreement of God's people in his worship the more visible, and puts the greater honour upon God, and would have a great tendency to assist and enliven the devotions of Christians. It seems to me, it would mightily encourage and animate God's Saints in humbly and earnestly seeking to God for such blessings which concern them all; and that it would be much for the rejoicing of all, to think, that at the same time such multitudes of God's dear children, far and near, were sending up their cries to the same common Father, for the same mercies. Christ speaks of agreement in asking, as what contributes to the prevalence of the prayers of his people, Mat. xviii. 19. *Again I say unto you, that if any two of you shall agree on Earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.* If the agreement, or united purpose and appointment, of but two of God's children, would contribute much to the prevalence of their prayers; how much more the agreement of so many thou-

sands? Christ delights greatly in the union of his people, as appears by his prayer in the 17th of John: and especially is the appearance of their union in worship lovely and attractive unto him.

I doubt not but such a thing as I have now mentioned is practicable without a great deal of trouble. Some considerable number of ministers might meet together, and draw up the proposal, wherein a certain day should be fixed at a sufficient distance, endeavouring therein to avoid any other public day that might interfere with the design in any of the provinces, and the business of the day should be particularly mentioned. These proposals should be published, and sent abroad into all parts, with a desire, that as many ministers as are disposed to fall in with them, would propose the matter to their congregations, and, having taken their consent, would subscribe their names, together with the places of which they are ministers, and send back the proposals thus subscribed to the printer. The hands of many ministers might be to one paper. The printer having received the papers, thus subscribed, from all the provinces, might print the proposals again, with all the names; thus they might be sent abroad again with the names, that God's people might know who are united with them in the affair. One of the ministers of *Boston* might be desired to have the oversight of printing and dispersing the proposals. In such a way, perhaps, might be fulfilled, in some measure, such a general mourning and supplication of God's people as is spoken of, Zech. xii. at the latter end, with which the church's glorious day is to be introduced.—And such a day might be something like the *day of atonement* in *Israel*, before the joyful *feast of tabernacles*.

One thing more I would mention concerning fasting and prayer, wherein I think there has been a neglect in ministers; and that is, That although they recommend and much insist on the duty of secret prayer, in their preaching; so little is said about secret fasting. It is a duty recommended by our Saviour to his followers, just in like manner as secret prayer is; as may be seen by comparing Matt. vi. 5, 6, with ver. 16—18. Though I do not suppose that secret fasting is to be practised in a stated manner, and steady course, like secret prayer; yet it seems to me a duty that all professing Christians should practise, and frequently practise. There are many occasions, of both a spiritual and temporal nature, that properly require it; and there are many particular mercies we desire

for ourselves or friends, that it would be proper in this manner to seek of God.

Another thing I would also mention, wherein it appears to me that there has been an omission, with respect to the external worship of God. There has been of late a great increase of preaching the word, of social prayer, and of singing praises. These external duties of religion are attended much more frequently than they used to be; yet I cannot understand that there is any increase of the administration of the Lord's Supper, or that God's people do any more frequently commemorate the dying love of their Redeemer, in this sacred memorial of it, than they used to do. I do not see why an increase of love to Christ should not dispose Christians as much to increase in this as in those other duties; or why it is not as proper that Christ's disciples should abound in this duty, in this joyful season, which is spiritually Supper-time, a feast-day with God's Saints, wherein Christ is so abundantly manifesting his dying love to souls, and is dealing forth so liberally of the precious fruits of his death. It seems plain by the scripture, that the primitive Christians were wont to celebrate this memorial of the sufferings of their dear Redeemer every Lord's day; and so I believe it will be again in the church of Christ, in days that are approaching. And whether we attend this holy and sweet ordinance so often now, or no; yet I cannot but think it would become us, at such a time as this, to attend it much oftner than is commonly done in the land.

But another thing I would mention, which it is of much greater importance that we should attend to, and that is the duty incumbent upon God's people at this day, to take heed, that while they abound in external duties of devotion, such as praying, hearing, singing, and attending religious meetings, there be a proportionable care to abound in moral duties, such as acts of righteousness, truth, meekness, forgiveness and love towards our neighbour; which are of much greater importance in the sight of God than all the externals of his worship. Our Saviour was particularly careful that men should be well aware of this Mat. ix. 13. *But go ye, and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* And chap. xii. 7. *But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*

The internal acts and principles of the worship of God, or the worship of the heart, in love and fear, trust in God, and resignation to him, &c. are the most essential and important of all duties of religion whatsoever; for therein consists the es-

sence of all religion. But of this inward religion there are two sorts of external manifestations or expressions. To one sort belong outward acts of worship, such as meeting in religious assemblies, attending sacraments and other outward institutions, honouring God with gestures, such as bowing, or kneeling before him, or with words, in speaking honourably of him in prayer, praise, or religious conference. To the other sort belong expressions of our love to God, by obeying his moral commands, self-denial, righteousness, meekness, and Christian love, in our behaviour among men. The latter are of vastly the greatest importance in the Christian life; God makes little account of the former, in comparison of them; they are abundantly more insisted on, by the prophets of the Old Testament, and Christ and his apostles in the New. When these two kinds of duties are spoken of together, the latter are evermore greatly preferred; as in Isa. i. 12—18. and Amos v. 21, &c. and Mic. vi. 7, 8. and Isa. lviii. 5, 6, 7. and Zech. vii. ten first verses, and Jer. ii. seven first verses, and Mat. xv. 3, &c. Often, when the times were very corrupt in Israel, the people abounded in the former kind of duties, but were at such times always notoriously deficient in the latter; as the prophets complain, Isa. lviii. four first verses, Jer. vi. 13, compared with *v.* 20. hypocrites and self-righteous persons do much more commonly abound in the former kind of duties than the latter; as Christ remarks of the *Pharisees*, Mat. xxiii. 14, 25,—34. When the scripture directs us to *shew our faith by our works*, it is principally the latter sort are intended; as appears by Jam. ii. from 8. *v.* to the end, and 1 John 2d chap. v. 3, 7—11. And we are to be judged, at the last day, especially by these latter sort of works; as is evident by the account we have of the day of judgment, in the 25th of Matth. External acts of worship, in words and gestures, and outward forms, are of little use, but as signs of something else, or as they are a profession of inward worship. They are not so properly shewing our religion by our deeds; for they are only shewing our religion by words, or an outward profession. But he that shows religion in the other sort of duties, shews it in something more than a profession of words, he shews it in deeds. And though deeds may be hypocritical, as well as words; yet in themselves they are of greater importance, for they are much more profitable to ourselves and our neighbour. We cannot express our love to God by doing any thing that is profitable to him; God would therefore have us do it in those things that are profitable to our neighbours, whom he has constituted his receivers. Our goodness extends

not to God, but to our fellow-christians. The latter sort of duties put greater honour upon God, because there is greater self-denial in them. The external acts of worship, consisting in bodily gestures, words and sounds, are the cheapest part of religion; and least contrary to our lusts. The difficulty of thorough, external religion, does not lie in them. Let wicked men enjoy their covetousness, their pride, their malice, envy and revenge, their sensuality and voluptuousness, in their behaviour amongst men; and they will be willing to compound the matter with God, and submit to what forms of worship you please, and as many as you please. This was manifest in the *Jews* in the days of the prophets, the *Pharisees* in Christ's time, and the *Papists* and *Mahometans* at this day.

At a time when there is an apparent approach of any glorious revival of God's church, he especially calls his professing people to the practice of moral duties, Isa. lvi. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.* So when *John* preached that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand*, and cried to the people, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*, Luke iii. 4. the people asked him, *What they should do?* He answers, *He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. The* Publicans *said, What shall we do?* He answers, *Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the Soldiers asked him, What shall we do?* He replies, *Do violence to no man; neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages*, ver. 10—14.

God's people, at such a time as this, ought especially to abound in deeds of charity, or alms-giving. We generally, in these days, seem to fall far below the true spirit and practice of Christianity with regard to this duty, and seem to have but little notion of it, so far as I can understand the New Testament.—At a time when God is so liberal of spiritual things, we ought not to be strait-handed towards him, and sparing of our temporal things. So far as I can judge by the scripture, there is no external duty whatsoever, by which persons will be so much in the way, not only of receiving temporal benefits, but also spiritual blessings, the influences of God's Holy Spirit in the heart, in divine discoveries, and spiritual consolations. I think it would be unreasonable to understand those promises, made to this duty, in the 58th chap. of Isaiah, in a sense exclusive of spiritual discoveries and comforts; Isa. lviii. 7, &c. —*Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring*

the poor that are cast out, to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rere-ward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am: if thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity: And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. So that giving to the poor is the way to receive spiritual blessings, is manifest by Psal. cxii. 4, &c. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved for ever; the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his horn shall be exalted with honour.* That this is one likely means to obtain assurance, is evident by 1 John iii. 18, 19. *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

We have a remarkable instance in *Abraham*, of God rewarding deeds of charity with sweet discoveries of himself. He had been remarkably charitable to his brother *Lot*, and the people redeemed out of captivity with him, by exposing his life to rescue them. He had re-taken not only the persons, but all the spoil that had been taken by *Chedorlaomer* and the confederate kings. The king of *Sodom* offered him, that, if he would give him the persons, he might take the goods to himself; but *Abraham* refused to take any thing, even so much as a thread or shoe-latchet, but returned all.—He might have greatly inriched himself if he had taken the spoil to himself, for it was the spoil of five wealthy kings and their kingdoms, yet he did not covet it. The king and people of *Sodom* were now become objects of charity, having

been stript of all by their enemies; therefore *Abraham* generously bestowed all upon them, as we have an account in Gen. xiv. and four last verses. He was soon rewarded for it, by a blessed discovery that God made of himself to him; as in the next words: *After these things the word of the Lord came unto* Abraham *in a vision, saying, Fear not,* Abraham: *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.* "I am thy shield, to defend thee in battle, as I have now done: And though thou hast charitably refused to take any reward for exposing thy life to rescue this people, yet fear not, thou shalt not be a loser, thou shalt have a reward; I am thy exceeding great reward."

When Christ was upon earth, he was poor, and an object of charity; and, during the time of his public ministry he was supported by the charity of some of his followers, and particularly certain women, of whom we read Luke viii. 2. 3. And these women were rewarded, by being peculiarly favoured with gracious manifestations which Christ made of himself to them. He discovered himself first to them after his resurrection, before the twelve disciples: They first saw a vision of glorious angels, who spake comfortably to them; and then Christ himself appeared to them, and spake peace to them, saying, *All hail, be not afraid; and they were admitted to come and hold him by the feet, and worship him,* Mat. xxviii. And though we cannot be charitable in *this way* to Christ, who in his exalted state is infinitely above the need of our charity; yet we may be charitable to him even now, as well as they then. For though Christ is not here, yet he has left others in his room, to be his receivers; and they are the poor. Christ is yet poor in his members; and he that gives to them, lends to the Lord: And Christ tells us, that he shall look on what is done to them, as done to him.

Rebekah, in her marriage with *Isaac*, was undoubtedly a remarkable type of the church, in her espousals to the Lord Jesus. She obtained her husband in doing deeds of charity; agreeable to the prayer of *Abraham's* servant, who desired that this might be the thing to distinguish the virgin who was to be *Isaac's* wife. So *Cornelius* was brought to the knowledge of Christ in this way. *He was a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house; which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. And an angel appeared to him, and said to him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God; and now send men to* Joppa, *and call for one* Simon, *whose sirname is* Peter, &c. Acts x. at the

beginning. And we have an account in the following parts of the chapter, how God, by *Peter's* preaching, revealed Christ to *Cornelius* and his family, and of the Holy Ghost descending upon them, and filling their hearts with joy and their mouths with praises.

Some may possibly object, That for persons to do deeds of charity, in hope of obtaining spiritual blessings and comforts in this way, would seem to shew a self-righteous spirit, as though they would offer something to God to purchase these favours. But, if this be a good objection, it may be made against every duty whatsoever. All external duties of the first table will be excluded by it, as well as those of the second. First-table duties have as direct a tendency to raise self-righteous persons expectations of receiving something from God, on account of them, as second-table duties; and on some accounts more, for those duties are more immediately offered *to God*, and therefore persons are more ready to expect something *from God* for them. But no duty is to be neglected, for fear of making a righteousness of it. And I have always observed, that those professors who are most partial in their duty—exact and abundant in external duties of the first table, and slack as to those of the second—are the most self-righteous.

If God's people in this land were once brought to abound in such deeds of love, as much as in praying, hearing, singing, and religious meetings and conference, it would be a most blessed omen. Nothing would have a greater tendency to bring the God of love down from heaven to earth; so amiable would be the sight in the eyes of our loving and exalted Redeemer, that it would soon as it were fetch him down from his throne in heaven, to set up his tabernacle with men on the earth, and dwell with them. I do not remember ever to have read of any remarkable outpouring of the spirit, that continued any long time, but what was attended with an abounding in this duty. We know it was so with that great effusion of the spirit which began at *Jerusalem* in the apostles' days. And so it was in the late remarkable revival of religion in *Saxony*, which began by the labours of the famous professor *Franck*, and has now been carried on for above thirty years, and has spread its happy influences into many parts of the world; it was begun, and has been carried on, by a wonderful practice in this duty. And the remarkable blessing that God has given Mr. *Whitefield*, and the great success with which he has crowned him, may well be thought to be very much owing to his laying out him-

self so abundantly in charitable designs. And it is foretold, that God's people shall abound in this duty at the time of the great outpouring of the spirit that shall be in the latter days, Isa. xxxii. 5, 8. *The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful—But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.*

To promote a reformation, with respect to all sorts of duties among a professing people, one proper means, and that which is recommended by frequent scripture-examples, is their solemn, public renewing of their covenant with God.—And doubtless it would greatly tend to promote this work in the land, if the congregations of God's people could generally be brought to this. Suppose a draught of a covenant be made by their ministers, wherein there should be an express mention of those particular duties that the people of the respective congregations have been observed to be most prone to neglect, those particular sins into which they have heretofore especially fallen, or of which it may be apprehended they are especially in danger, whereby they may prevent or resist the motions of God's Spirit. Suppose the matter be fully proposed and explained to the people, and, after sufficient opportunity for consideration, they be led, all that are capable of understanding, particularly to subscribe the covenant. Suppose also all appear together on a day of prayer and fasting, publicly to own it before God in his house, as their vow to the Lord; hereby congregations of Christians would do what would be beautiful in itself, what would put honour upon God, and be very profitable to themselves. Such a thing was attended with a very wonderful blessing in *Scotland*, and followed with a great increase of the blessed tokens of the presence of God, and remarkable out-pourings of his spirit; as the author of the *fulfilling of the scripture* informs, p. 186. 5th edition.—A people must be taken when they are in a good mood, when considerable religious impressions prevail among them; otherwise innumerable will be their objections and cavils against it.

One thing more I would mention, which, if God should still carry on this work, would tend much to promote it; and that is, That a history should be published once a month, or once a fortnight, of its progress, by one of the ministers of *Boston*, who are near the press, and are most conveniently situated to receive accounts from all parts. It has been found by experience, that the tidings of remarkable effects of the power and grace of God in any place, tends greatly to awaken and engage the minds of persons in other places. 'Tis great

pity therefore, but that some means should be used for the most speedy, most extensive and certain information of such things; that the country be not left to the slow, partial and doubtful information, and false representations of common report.

Thus I have (I hope, by the help of God) finished what I proposed. I have taken the more pains in it, because it appears to me that now God is giving us the most happy season to attempt an universal reformation that ever was given in *New-England.* And it is a thousand pities, that we should fail of that which would be so glorious, for want of being sensible of our opportunity, of being aware of those things that tend to hinder it, of taking improper courses to obtain it, or of not being sensible in what way God expects we should seek it. If it should please God to bless any means for convincing the country of his hand in this work, for bringing them fully and freely to acknowledge his glorious power and grace in it; and for bringing them to engage with one heart and soul, and by due methods, to endeavour to promote it, it would be a dispensation of divine providence that would have a most glorious aspect, happily signifying the approach of great and glorious things to the church of God, and justly causing us to hope that Christ would speedily come to set up his kingdom of light, holiness, peace and joy on earth, as is foretold in his word. *Amen;* even so come, Lord Jesus!

FIVE

DISCOURSES

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

NEARLY

CONCERNING THE GREAT AFFAIR

OF THE

SOUL'S ETERNAL SALVATION,

VIZ.

I. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.
II. PRESSING INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.
III. RUTH'S RESOLUTION.
IV. THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN THE DAMNATION OF SINNERS.
V. THE EXCELLENCY OF JESUS CHRIST.

DELIVERED AT NORTHAMPTON,

Chiefly at the time of the late wonderful pouring out of the Spirit of God there.

DEUT. iv. 9.—*Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.*

PREFACE.

THE following discourses were all, excepting the last, delivered in the time of the late wonderful work of God's power and grace in this place, and are now published * on the earnest desire of those to whom they were preached. These particular discourses are fixed upon, and designed for the press, rather than others that were delivered in that remarkable season, by *their* election. What has determined them in their choice, is the experience they hope they have had of special benefit to their souls from *these discourses*. Their desire to have them in their hands from the press has been long manifested, and often expressed to me; their earnestness in it is evident from this, that though it be a year of the greatest public charge to them that ever has been, by reason of the expence of building a new meeting-house, yet they chose rather to be at this additional expence now, though it be very considerable, than to have it delayed another year. I am fully sensible that their value for these discourses has arisen more from the frame in which they heard them, and the good which, through the sovereign blessing of God, they have received, than any real worth in them. And whatever the discourses are in themselves, yet those who heard them are not to be blamed or wondered at, if that is dear to them, which they hope God has made a means of saving and everlasting benefit. They have much insisted on this argument with me, to induce me to comply with their desire, *viz.* that they hoped the reading of these discourses would have a tendency in some measure to renew the same effect in them that was wrought in the hearing, and revive the memory of that great work of God, which this town has so much cause ever to remember; which argument has been of principal weight with me, to incline me to think it to be my duty to comply with their desire; though I cannot say there are no other considerations concurring to induce me to it.

With respect to the discourse on *justification*, besides the desire of my people to make it public, I have been advised to it by certain reverend gentlemen, my fathers, that happened to be the hearers of it, (or, at least, part of it) when preached, whose opinion and advice, in such an affair, I thought should be of as great weight with me as of most that I was acquainted with.

The beginning of the late work of God in this place was so circumstanced, that could not but look upon it as a remarkable testimony of God's approbation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, here asserted and vindicated.——By the noise that had a little before been raised in this county concerning that doctrine, people here seemed to have their minds put into an unusual rate; some were brought to doubt of that way of accep-

* Viz. at Boston, 1738.

ance with God, which from their infancy they had been taught to be the only way; and many were engaged more thoroughly to look into the grounds of those doctrines in which they had been educated.——The following discourse of justification, that was preached (though not so fully as it is here printed) at two public lectures, seemed to be remarkably blessed, not only to establish the judgments of many in this truth, but to engage their hearts in a more earnest pursuit of justification, in that way that had been explained and defended; and *at that time*, while I was greatly reproached for defending this doctrine in the pulpit, and just upon my suffering a very open abuse for it, God's work wonderfully brake forth amongst us, and souls began to flock to Christ, as the Saviour in whose righteousness alone they hoped to be justified. So that this was the doctrine on which this work in its beginning was founded, as it evidently was in the whole progress of it.

A great objection that is made against the old protestant doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, and the scheme of those divines that have chiefly defended it, by those that value themselves upon the new fashioned divinity, is, that the scheme is too much incumbered with speculative niceties, and subtle distinctions, that, they say, serve only to involve the subject in endless controversy and dispute; whereas, their scheme, they suppose, is a plain, easy, and natural account of things. But their prejudice against distinctions in divinity, I humbly conceive, is carried to a great extreme. So great, so general, and loud a cry has been raised by modern philosophers and divines against the subtle distinctions of the schoolmen, for their learned impertinence, that many are ready to start at any thing that looks like nice distinction, and to condemn it for nonsense without examination. Upon the same account, we might expect to have St. Paul's epistles, that are full of very nice distinctions, called nonsense and unintelligible jargon, had not they the good luck to be universally received by all Christians as part of the holy Scriptures.

Our discovering the absurdity of the impertinent and abstruse distinctions of the school divines, may justly give us a distaste of *such distinctions* as have a shew of learning in obscure words, but convey no light to the mind; but I can see no reason why we should also discard those that are clear and rational, and can be made out to have their foundation in truth, although they may be such as require some diligence and attention of mind clearly to apprehend them. So much of the Scripture scheme of justification as is absolutely necessary to salvation, may be very plain, and level with the understandings of the weakest Christians; but it does not therefore follow, that the Scripture teaches us no more about it that would be exceeding profitable for us to know, and by gaining the knowledge of which, we may obtain a more full and clear understanding of this doctrine, and be better able to solve doubts that may arise concerning it, and to defend it from the sophistry and cavils of subtle opposers.

It is so in most of the great doctrines of Christianity, that are looked upon as first principles of the Christian faith, that though they contain something that is easy, yet they also contain great mysteries, and there is room for progress in the knowledge of them, and doubtless will be to the end of the world. But it is unreasonable, to expect that this progress should be made in the knowledge of things that are high and mysterious, without accurate distinction and close application of thought: and it is also unreasonable, to think that this doctrine, of the justification of a sinner by a

mediator, should be without mysteries. We all own it to be a matter of pure revelation, above the light of natural reason, and that it is what the infinite wisdom of God revealed in the gospel mainly appears in, that he hath found out such a way of reconciliation of which neither men nor angels could have thought. And after all, shall we expect that this way, when found out and declared, shall contain nothing but what is obvious to the most cursory and superficial view, and may be fully and clearly comprehended without some diligence, accuracy, and careful distinction?

If the distinctions I have made use of in handling this subject are found to be inconsistent, trivial, and unscriptural niceties, tending only to cloud the subject, I ought to be willing that they should be rejected; but if on due examination they are found both scriptural and rational, I humbly conceive that it will be unjust to condemn them, merely because they are distinctions, under a notion that niceness in divinity never helps it, but always perplexes and darkens it. It is to God's own revelation that I make my appeal, by which alone we can know in what way he will be pleased again to receive into favour those who have offended him and incurred his displeasure. If there be any part of the scheme here laid down, or any distinction here used, not warranted by scripture, let it be rejected; and if any opposite scheme can be found that is more easy and plain, having fewer and more rational distinctions, and not demonstrably inconsistent with itself, and with the word of God, let it be received. Let the Arminian scheme of justification by our own virtue be as *plain* and natural as it will, if at the same time it is *plainly* contrary to the certain and demonstrable doctrine of the gospel, as contained in the scriptures, we are bound to reject it, unless we reject the scriptures themselves as perplexed and absurd, and make ourselves wiser than God, and pretend to know his mind better than himself.

This discourse on justification is printed much larger than it was preached; but the practical discourses that follow have but little added to them, and now appear in that very plain and unpolished dress in which they were first prepared and delivered; which was mostly at a time when the circumstances of the auditory they were were preached to, were enough to make a minister neglect, forget, and despise such ornaments as politeness and modishness of style and method, when coming as a messenger from God to souls deeply impressed with a sense of their danger of God's everlasting wrath, to treat with them about their eternal salvation.——However unable I am to preach or write politely, if I would, yet I have this to comfort me under such a defect, that God has shewed us he does not need such talents in men to carry on his own work, and that he has been pleased to smile upon and bless a very plain unfashionable way of preaching. And have we not reason to think, that it ever has been, and ever will be God's manner, to bless the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, let the elegance of language and excellency of style be carried to never so great a height, by the learning and wit of the present and future ages?

What is published at the end, concerning the excellency of Christ, is added on my own motion; thinking that a discourse on such an evangelical subject would properly follow others that were chiefly awakening, and that something of the excellency of the Saviour was proper to succeed those things that were to shew the necessity of *salvation*. I pitched upon that particular discourse, partly because I had been earnestly importuned for a copy of it

for the press, by some in another town in whose hearing it was occasionally preached.

I request every reader's candid acceptance and due improvement of what is here offered; and especially would earnestly beseech the people of my own charge, not to fail of improving these discourses to those purposes that they have mentioned to me as the ends for which they desired to have them published, that I may have no cause to repent of my labour in transcribing, nor they of their cost in printing them. Happy would it be for us, and an unspeakable mercy of Heaven, if God should bless what is here printed, so to revive the memory of the past great work of God amongst us, and the lively impressions and sense of divine things that persons then had on their minds, and to cause us to lament our declensions, so that the same work might renewedly break forth and go on amongst us! Surely we have seen much to excite our longings after such a mercy, and to encourage us to cry to God for it!

DISCOURSE I.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.

ROM. IV. 5.

BUT TO HIM THAT WORKETH NOT, BUT BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY, HIS FAITH IS COUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE following things may be noted in this verse:

1. That justification respects a man as ungodly. This is evident by these words,——*that justifieth the ungodly;* which cannot imply less, than that God, in the act of justification, has no regard to any thing in the person justified, as godliness, or any goodness in him; but that immediately before this act, God beholds him only as an ungodly creature; so that godliness in the person to be justified is not so antecedent to his justification as to be the ground of it. When it is said that God justifies the ungodly, it is as absurd to suppose that our godliness, taken as some goodness in us, is the ground of our justification; as, when it is said that Christ gave sight to the blind, to suppose that sight was prior to, and the ground of that act of mercy in Christ; or as, if it should be said that such an one by his bounty has made a poor man rich, to suppose that it was the wealth of this poor man that was the ground of this bounty towards him, and was the price by which it was procured.

2. It appears, that *by him that worketh not*, in this verse, is not meant one who merely does not conform to the ceremonial law; because *he that worketh not* and *the ungodly*, are evidently synonymous expressions, or what signify the same, as appears by the manner of their connection; if not, to what purpose is the latter expression, *the ungodly*, brought in? The context gives no other occasion for it, but to show, that

by the grace of the gospel, God in justification has no regard to any godliness of ours. The foregoing verse is, "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." In *that* verse, it is evident, gospel grace consists in the reward being given *without works*; and in *this* verse, which immediately follows it, and in sense is connected with it, gospel-grace consists in a man's being justified as *ungodly*. By which it is most plain, that by *him that worketh not*, and him that is *ungodly*, are meant the same thing; and that therefore not only works of the ceremonial law are excluded in this business of justification, but works of morality and godliness.

3. It is evident in the words, that by the faith here spoken of, by which we are justified, is not meant the same thing as a course of obedience or righteousness, since the expression by which this faith is here denoted, is *believing on him that justifies the ungodly*.——They that oppose the Solifidians, as they call them, greatly insist on it, that we should take the words of scripture concerning this doctrine in their most natural and obvious meaning; and how do they cry out, of our clouding this doctrine with obscure metaphors, and unintelligible figures of speech? But is this to interpret scripture according to its most obvious meaning, when the scripture speaks of our *believing on him that justifies the ungodly*, or the *breakers of his law*, to say, that the meaning of it is performing a course of obedience to his law, and avoiding the breaches of it? Believing on God as a *justifier*, certainly is a different thing from submitting to God as a *lawgiver*; especially believing on him as a justifier of *the ungodly*, or rebels *against the lawgiver*.

4. It is evident that the subject of justification is looked upon as destitute of any righteousness in himself, by that expression, *it is counted, or imputed to him for righteousness*.—The phrase, as the apostle uses it here and in the context, manifestly imports, that God of his sovereign grace is pleased, in his dealings with the sinner, so to regard one that has no righteousness, that the consequence shall be the same as if he had. This however may be from the respect it bears to something that is indeed righteous. It is plain that this is the force of the expression in the preceding verses. In the last verse but one, it is manifest, the apostle lays the stress of his argument for the free grace of God,—from that text of the Old Testament about Abraham—on the word *counted* or *imputed*; and this is the thing that he supposed God to shew his grace

in, viz. in his *counting* something for righteousness, in his consequential dealings with Abraham, that was no righteousness in itself. And in the next verse which immediately precedes the text, "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," the word there translated *reckoned*, is the same that in the other verses is rendered *imputed*, and *counted:* and it is as much as if the apostle had said, "As to *him that works*, there is no need of any gracious *reckoning* or *counting* it for righteousness, and causing the reward to follow as if it were a righteousness; for if he has works, he has that which is a righteousness in itself, to which the reward properly belongs." This is further evident by the words that follow, verse 6. "Even as David also described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." What can here be meant by imputing righteousness without works, but imputing righteousness to him that has none of his own? verse 7, 8. "Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." How are these words of David to the apostle's purpose? or how do they prove any such thing, as that righteousness is imputed without works, unless it be because the word *imputed* is used, and the subject of the imputation is mentioned as a sinner, and consequently destitute of a moral righteousness? For David says no such thing, as that he is forgiven without the works of the ceremonial law; there is no hint of the ceremonial law, or reference to it, in the words.—I will therefore venture to infer this *doctrine* from the words, for the subject of my present discourse, viz.

That we are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own.

Such an assertion as this, I am sensible, many would be ready to call absurd, as betraying a great deal of ignorance, and containing much inconsistence; but I desire every one's patience till I have done.

In handling this doctrine, I would,

I. Explain the *meaning* of it, and shew how I would be understood by such an assertion.

II. Proceed to the consideration of the evidence of the *truth* of it.

III. Shew how evangelical obedience is concerned in this affair.

IV. Answer objections.

V. Consider the importance of the doctrine.

I. I would explain the meaning of the doctrine, or shew in what sense I assert it, and would endeavour to evince the truth of it: which may be done in answer to these two inquiries, viz. 1. What is meant by being justified? What is meant when it is said, that this is, "by faith alone, without any manner of virtue or goodness of our own?"

First, I would shew what justification is, or what I suppose is meant in scripture by being justified.

A person is said to be *justified*, when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness belonging to him that intitles to the reward of life. That we should take the word in such a sense, and understand it as the judges accepting a person as having both a negative and positive righteousness belonging to him, and looking on him therefore as not only free from any obligation to punishment, but also as just and righteous, and so intitled to a positive reward, is not only most agreeable to the etymology and natural import of the word, which signifies to pass one for righteous in judgment, but also manifestly agreeable to the force of the word as used in scripture.

Some suppose that nothing more is intended in scripture by justification, than barely the remission of sins. If so, it is very strange, if we consider the nature of the case; for it is most evident, and none will deny, that it is with respect to the rule or law of God we are under, that we are said in Scripture to be either justified or condemned. Now what is it to justify a person as the subject of a law or rule, but to judge him as standing right with respect to that rule? To justify a person in a particular case, is to approve of him as standing right, as subject to the law in that case; and to justify in general is to pass him in judgment, as standing right in a state correspondent to the law or rule in general: but certainly, in order to a person's being looked on as standing right with respect to the rule in general, or in a state corresponding with the law of God, more is needful than not having the guilt of sin; for whatever that law is, whether a new or an old one, doubtless something positive is needed in order to its being answered. We are no more justified by the voice of the law, or of him that judges according to it, by a mere pardon of sin, than Adam, our first surety, was justified by the law, at the first point of his existence, before he had fulfilled the obedience of the law, or had

so much as any trial whether he would fulfil it or no. If Adam had finished his course of perfect obedience, he would have been justified: and certainly his justification would have implied something more than what is merely negative; he would have been approved of, as having fulfilled the righteousness of the law, and accordingly would have been adjudged to the reward of it. So Christ, our second surety, (in whose justification all whose surety he is, are virtually justified), was not justified till he had done the work the Father had appointed him, and kept the Father's commandments through all trials; and then in his resurrection he was justified. When he had been put to death in the flesh was quickened by the spirit, 1 Pet. iii. 18. then he that was manifest in the flesh was justified in the spirit, 1 Tim. iii. 16; but God, when he justified him in raising him from the dead, did not only release him from his humiliation for sin, and acquit him from any further suffering or abasement for it, but admitted him to that eternal and immortal life, and to the beginning of that exaltation that was the reward of what he had done. And indeed the justification of a believer is no other than his being admitted to communion in the justification of this head and surety of all believers; for as Christ suffered the punishment of sin, not as a private person, but as our surety; so when after this suffering he was raised from the dead, he was therein justified, not as a private person, but as the surety and representative of all that should believe in him. So that he was raised again not only for his own, but also for our justification, according to the apostle, Rom. iv. 25. "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." And therefore it is that the apostle says, as he does in Rom. viii. 34. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."

But that a believer's justification implies not only remission of sins, or acquittance from the wrath due to it, but also an admittance to a title to that glory which is the reward of righteousness, is more directly taught in the Scripture, particularly in Rom. v. 1. 2. where the apostle mentions both these as joint benefits implied in justification: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." So remission of sin; and inheritance among them that are sanctified, are mentioned together as what are jointly obtained by faith in Christ, Acts, xxvi. 18. "That they may receive for-

giveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in me." Both these are without doubt implied in that passing from death to life, which Christ speaks of as the fruit of faith, and which he opposes to condemnation, John, v. 24. "Verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." I proceed now,

Secondly, To shew what is meant when it is said, that this justification is by faith only, and not by any virtue or goodness of our own.

This inquiry may be subdivided into two, viz.

1. How it is by *faith*. 2. How it is by faith *alone*, without any manner of goodness of ours.

1. How justification is by *faith*.—Here the great difficulty has been about the import and force of the particle *by*, or what is that influence that faith has in the affair of justification that is expressed in Scripture by being justified by faith.

Here, if I may humbly express what seems evident to me, though faith be indeed the condition of justification so as nothing else is, yet this matter is not clearly and sufficiently explained by saying that faith is the condition of justification; and that because the word seems ambiguous, both in common use, and also as used in divinity. In one sense, Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and salvation; in another sense, faith is the condition of justification; in another sense, other qualifications and acts are conditions of salvation and justification too. There seems to be a great deal of ambiguity in such expressions as are commonly used, (which yet we are forced to use), such as condition of salvation, what is required in order to salvation or justification, the terms of the covenant, and the like; and I believe they are understood in very different senses by different persons. And besides, as the word condition is very often understood in the common use of language, faith is not the only thing in us that is the condition of justification; for by the word condition, as it is very often (and perhaps most commonly) used, we mean any thing that may have the place of a condition in a conditional proposition, and as such is truly connected with the consequent, especially if the proposition holds both in the affirmative and negative, as the condition is either affirmed or denied. If it be that with which, or which being supposed, a thing shall be, and without which, or it being denied, a thing shall not be, we in such a case call it a condition of that thing. But in this

sense faith is not the only condition of salvation or justification; for there are many things that accompany and flow from faith, with which justification shall be, and without which it will not be, and therefore are found to be put in scripture in conditional propositions with justification and salvation, in multitudes of places; such are love to God, and love to our brethren, forgiving men their trespasses, and many other good qualifications and acts. And there are many other things besides faith, which are directly proposed to us, to be pursued or performed by us, in order to eternal life, which if they are done, or obtained, we shall have eternal life, and if not done, or not obtained, we shall surely perish. And if faith was the only condition of justification in this sense, I do not apprehend that to say faith was the condition of justification, would express the sense of that phrase of scripture, of being justified by faith. There is a difference between being justified by a thing, and that thing universally, necessarily, and inseparably attending justification; for so do a great many things that we are not said to be justified by. It is not the inseparable connection with justification that the Holy Ghost would signify (or that is naturally signified) by such a phrase, but some particular influence that faith has in the affair, or some certain dependence that effect has on its influence.

Some, aware of this, have supposed, that the influence or dependence might well be expressed by faith's being the *instrument* of our justification; which has been misunderstood, and injuriously represented, and ridiculed by those that have denied the doctrine of justification by faith alone, as though they had supposed faith was used as an instrument in the hand of God, whereby he performed and brought to pass that act of his, viz. approving and justifying the believer. Whereas it was not intended that faith was the instrument wherewith God justifies, but the instrument wherewith we receive justification; not the instrument wherewith the justifier acts in justifying, but wherewith the receiver of justification acts in accepting justification. But yet, it must be owned, this is an obscure way of speaking, and there must certainly be some impropriety in calling it an instrument wherewith we receive or accept justification; for the very persons who thus explain the matter, speak of faith as being the reception or acceptance itself; and if so, how can it be the instrument of reception or acceptance? Certainly there is a difference between the act and the instrument. Besides, by their own descriptions of faith, Christ, the mediator by whom, and his righteousness

by which we are justified, is more directly the object of this acceptance and justification, which is the benefit arising therefrom more indirectly; and therefore, if faith be an instrument, it is more properly the instrument by which we receive Christ, than the instrument by which we receive justification.

But I humbly conceive we have been ready to look too far to find out what that influence of faith in our justification is, or what is that dependence of this effect on faith, signified by the expression of being justified by faith, overlooking that which is most obviously pointed forth in the expression, viz. that, (there being a mediator that has purchased justification), faith in this mediator is that which renders it a meet and suitable thing, in the sight of God, that the believer, rather than others, should have this purchased benefit assigned to him.—There is this benefit purchased, which God sees it to be a more meet and suitable thing that it should be assigned to some rather than others, because he sees them differently qualified; that qualification wherein the meetness to this benefit, as the case stands, consists, is that in us by which we are justified. If Christ had not come into the world and died, &c. to purchase justification, no qualification whatever in us could render it a meet or fit thing that we should be justified. But the case being as it now stands, viz. that Christ has actually purchased justification by his own blood for infinitely unworthy creatures, there may be certain qualifications found in some persons, which, either from the relation it bears to the mediator and his merits, or on some other account, is the thing that in the sight of God renders it a meet and condecent thing, that they should have an interest in this purchased benefit, and of which if any are destitute, it renders it an unfit and unsuitable thing that they should have it. The wisdom of God in his constitutions doubtless appears much in the fitness and beauty of them, so that those things are established to be done that are fit to be done, and that these things are connected in his constitution that are agreeable one to another. So God justifies a believer according to his revealed constitution, without doubt, because he sees something in this qualification that, as the case stands, renders it a fit thing that such should be justified; whether it be because faith is the instrument, or as it were the hand, by which he that has purchased justification is apprehended and accepted, or because it is the acceptance itself, or whatever else. To be justified, is to be approved of God as a proper subject of pardon, with a right to eternal life; and therefore, when it is said that we are justified by faith, what

else can be understood by it, than that faith is that by which we are rendered approvable, fitly so, and indeed, as the case stands, proper subjects of this benefit?

This is something different from faith being the *condition* of justification, though inseparably connected with justification. So are many other things besides faith; and yet nothing in us but faith renders it meet that we should have justification assigned to us; as I shall presently shew in answer to the next inquiry, viz.

2. How this is said to be by faith *alone*, without any manner of virtue or goodness of our own. This may seem to some to be attended with two difficulties, viz. how this can be said to be by faith alone, without any virtue or goodness of ours, when faith itself is a virtue, and one part of our goodness, and is not only some manner of goodness of ours, but is a very excellent qualification, and one chief part of the inherent holiness of a Christian? And if it be a part of our inherent goodness or excellency (whether it be this part or any other) that renders it a condecent or congruous thing that we should have this benefit of Christ assigned to us, what is this less than what they mean who talk of a merit of congruity? And moreover, if this part of our Christian holiness qualifies us, in the sight of God, for this benefit of Christ, and renders it a fit or meet thing, in his sight, that we should have it, why should not other parts of holiness, and conformity to God, which are also very excellent, and have as much of the image of Christ in them, and are no less lovely in God's eyes, qualify us as much, and have as much influence to render us meet, in God's sight, for such a benefit as this? Therefore I answer,

When it is said, that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our *own*, what is meant is, that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever, that God judges it meet that this benefit of Christ should be ours; and it is not, in any wise, on account of any excellency or value that there is in faith, that it appears in the sight of God a meet thing, that he who believes should have this benefit of Christ assigned to him, but purely from the relation faith has to the person in whom this benefit is to be had, or as it unites to that mediator, in and by whom we are justified. Here, for the greater clearness, I would particularly explain myself under several propositions.

1.) It is certain that there is some union or relation that the people of Christ stand in to him, that is expressed in scrip-

ture, from time to time, by being *in Christ*, and is represented frequently by those metaphors of being members of Christ, or being united to him as members to the head, and branches to the stock,* and is compared to a marriage union between husband and wife. I do not now pretend to determine of what sort this union is; nor is it necessary to my present purpose to enter into any manner of disputes about it. If any are disgusted at the word *union*, as obscure and unintelligible, the word *relation* equally serves my purpose. I do not now desire to determine any more about it, than all, of all sorts, will readily allow, viz. that there is a peculiar *relation* between true Christians and Christ, which there is not between him and others; and which is signified by those metaphorical expressions in scripture, of being in Christ, being members of Christ, &c †

* "Our Saviour compares his mystical body, that is his church, to a vine, which "his Father, whom he compares to a husbandman, hath planted; *I am the true vine, and "my Father is the husbandman.* To represent to us the union that is betwixt Christ and "all true Christians, and the influence of grace and spiritual life, which all that are united "to him do derive and receive from him, he sets it forth to us by the re emblance of a vine and branches. As there is a natural vital union between the vine and the branches, so there is a spiritual union between Christ and true Christians; "and this union is the cause of our fruitfulness in the works of obedience and a good life. "There are some indeed that seem to be grafted into Christ by an outward profession of "Chr stianity, who yet derive no influence from him, so as to bring forth fruit, because "they are not vitally united to him." *Dr. Tillotson in his 3d vol. of Serm. p 307.*

By this it appears that the vital union between Christ and true Christians, which is much more of a mystery than the relative union, and necessarily implies it, was not thought an unreasonable doctrine by one of the greatest divines on the other side of the question in hand.

† The word "*union*," in this connection, is both more intelligible and more appropriate, than the word *relation*; since in this connection the latter is the consequence of the former. As the doctrine of a *vital union* to Christ is fundamentally important in Christianity, and inseparable from the doctrine of justification; and as our author passes it over with so much brevity, a few observations upon it in this place may appear the more needful.

1. The scriptures are not only full of the *fact*, but they abound with *illustrations* of it. The first part of John xv. is full and explicit to this purpose.

2. What the scriptures assert and illustrate, is abundantly corroborated by the *reasonableness* of the thing. To suppose the reality of *vital religion* without a corresponding *vital union*, is to suppose an important effect without an adequate cause, as shall be further shewn.

3. The question then is, What is the *immediate cause* of this vital union? Now as the union subsisting is between the spirit of *Christ* and *man*, the immediate *cause* must be in the *one* or the *other* of these, or in *both* at the same instant, or in *neither*. If the immediate cause be in MAN, he makes his approach to Christ either as a *carnal* or a *spiritual* man, for there is no conceivable medium. But the idea of a *carnal* man uniting himself to Christ in order to form a vital union, is both unscriptural and unreasonable. It is *unscriptural*; for the scripture asserts that "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" how then can it be the cause of a vital union? "Of *Him* are ye in Christ Jesus;"—"and you hath *he* quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;"—it is not therefore the carnal man that unites himself to Christ, or quickens himself in order to effect it. It is also *unreasonable*; for it supposes a glorious effect without an *adequate* cause. The effect

2. This *relation* or *union* to Christ, whereby Christians are said to be in Christ, (whatever it be), is the ground of their right to his benefits. This needs no proof; the reason of the

is *spiritual*, while the cause is *carnal*, which are not only different but even directly *opposite*. What ideas can be more contradictory, or sentiment more unreasonable?

4. The supposition of *two simultaneous causes*, the one being the spirit of Christ, and the other the carnal man, involves the same inconsistency. For how can the mere circumstance of *time*, irrespective of *causal* influence, make any difference? If the carnal mind be adequate to unite itself to Christ at *one time*, why not at *another* time as well, except some *causal* influence makes the difference? For surely no one can suppose that some individual moment of time, as distinguished from others preceding, constitutes the *cause* of difference.

5. To suppose a *spiritual* man, whether by the exercise of his faith or by any other mental act, in the *cause* of a vital union, is no less inconsistent than the former suppositions. For how came he to be a *spiritual* man without a spiritual causal influence? But if such influence be admitted as a predisposing cause of his vital acts, it is incumbent on the objector to shew that such causal influence *may* take place *without* vital union. This, I am persuaded no one can do. It is contrary to all analogy, and to every sound principle of true philosophy. It is contrary to Christian experience and revealed statements. What effect in *physical* nature can be produced, which does not imply a causal *union*? Does not the divine energy pervade all second causes in the way of *union* with them, in order to the production of their effects? and what *miraculous* effects have ever been produced without a present *uniting* cause? For instance, when Lazarus came forth from death to life, was there not an *uniting* causal influence to produce the change? and if we appeal to an experienced intelligent Christian, will he not own, will he not maintain, according to his views of revealed truth, that the powerful, the quickening, and uniting presence, the vital and transforming energy of the spirit of God or of Christ in him, was the cause of his own vitality? Nay, would he not be shocked to hear any one maintain the contrary?

6. Perhaps it may be thought, that—though in the great laboratory of physical nature, in the bowels of the earth and in the surrounding atmosphere, a *causal union* be necessary to produce *chemical* effects; and that though in all works of mechanism a *causal union* is requisite to the existence of *mechanical* effects; and that, moreover, though the sun by his light and heat produces an effect upon objects by a *causal union* with them; yet—what shall we say of one body affecting a change of situation in another, at an immense distance? Does not the sun powerfully attract all the planets that surround him, however distant? and how can this be by *causal union*? This objection admits of two answers.

7. *First*, it has never been *proved*, that there is *no causal union* between these bodies adequate to the effect; while on the contrary several philosophers have at least attempted to shew its existence. The solar system, for ought we know, may be perfectly mechanical, though we should never be able to perceive the intermediate parts.

8. *Secondly*, as the universe in general depends on the *causal presence* of the first cause, so must every part of it; Scripture and reason assure us that IN GOD we *live* and *move*, and have our *being*. Therefore, whether there be any *intermediate* cause of gravitation or not, between the effect and the first cause, a *causal union* is still necessary to the effect. What difference there is, lies *against* the objector. For if there be no *intermediate* cause of gravitation, the presence, the energy, the *causal union* of the first cause is proportionally the *more immediate*.

9. Having shewn that neither the carnal man nor the spiritual man is the immediate cause of the union subsisting between Christ and the Christian, it remains to be ascertained, what else is the cause? If it be not man it must be the DIVINE SPIRIT, either as the spirit of the *Father* or of *Christ*. In one view this difference is not very material, but in another it is of considerable importance. Allow it to be from the Holy Spirit, in either sense, it secures the great point of salvation by *grace*, in opposition to our own merit. But, as it respects the nature of Christ's mediation, and particularly his federal headship and suretiship, it is of moment to ascertain, whether he or the father, economically, be the *immediate cause* of the vital union.

thing, at first blush, demonstrates it. It is exceeding evident also by scripture, 1 John, v. 12. "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." 1 Cor.

10. The scripture fully declares that the influence of the spirit on the minds of men is from *Christ*. The Lord from heaven is a *quickening spirit*—he *quickeneth* whom he will—he *sends* the Holy Ghost—he *gives* repentance, or the spirit of repentance—in him was *life*, (without whom nothing was created) and this life is the true light of men—he *shines* into the heart—his *grace* and *strength* constitute our sufficiency—&c. These and other passages inumerable shew, that quickening influence proceeds from his fulness of life and grace.

11. That other passages ascribe spiritual effects to the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, is of no force, except with such as deny the divine nature of Christ, who are confuted on other grounds. But supposing his divine nature in union with humanity, the spirit of God is the spirit of Christ, and *vice versa*. And in the divine economy of grace, Christ is the head or source of influence to the church, It is he who gives gifts to the rebellious, who endows with the spirit of life, and who bestows the living water to which divine influence is compared.

12. And how beautifully consistent must this appear when we consider, that as a covenant head he is the *surety* of his chosen people? The office of a surety engages to perform what is requisite in behalf of a person or persons as required by another. Thus Jesus not only brought in an everlasting righteousness in behalf of his people as their federal perfection, in lieu of those who could never attain to it by any obedience of their own; but it also belonged to his office to secure for them a voluntary, penitential, believing obedience to the equitable requisitions of the divine governor. This can be effected only by divine influence, and that influence must needs proceed from him as the immediate cause; otherwise we make the creditor and surety to be the very same. God as governor *demands obedience* from all the subjects of his government; and Christ as the surety of those who were given him *enables* them to comply with those demands, that is, to *submit*, to repent, to believe with the heart, to love God, and to walk with him.

13. From the premises it follows plainly, that the *immediate cause* of vital union is the SPIRIT OF CHRIST, which he bestows in the exercise of his office as the federal head of influence, and in virtue of his suretiship for his church and people. He as the true vine communicates life to the branches, and as the head of his church brings dead souls to be his living members. Faith is a *fruit* of the spirit, and not the *cause* of a spiritual existence. Yet,

14. We maintain that *faith* forms a *consequent* union. Man being a subject of moral government, and therefore a free agent, at liberty to choose his end and means of happiness for which he is accountable; and God in infinite mercy proposing Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life; the all-sufficient and only Saviour of sinners—in whom we are required to believe and to trust with confidence, and whom we are encouraged to receive into our hearts, that he may dwell there by faith—the regenerate soul, by *believing*, *unites* itself to this object.

15. The former union is the immediate effect of *sovereign favour*; the latter union is the immediate effect of *exercised* grace; in the performance of an incumbent *duty*, or the discharge of moral *obligation*. Now since men are exhorted, warned, directed, reasoned and expostulated with, on the ground of what they *ought* to do or abstain from doing, the scripture abounds with such addresses. But lest any false inferences should be drawn, derogatory from the honours of sovereign grace, we are assured that every good and perfect gift cometh from the Father of lights. When we have done all we are unprofitable servants. Work out your own salvation, says Paul, with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. No one can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him, that is, without divine influence; and whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. Ye are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Among many other parts of scripture where *grace* and *obligation* are strikingly intermixed, and illustrative of the preceding remarks, the reader is particularly referred to the *sixth* and *fifteenth* chapters of St. John's Gospel.

16. *Corell.* The old mode, adopted by many orthodox divines, of distinguishing

i. 30. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us—righteousness." First we must be *in him*, and then he will be made righteousness or justification to us. Eph. 1. 6. "Who hath made us accepted in the beloved." Our being *in him* is the ground of our being accepted. So it is in those unions to which the Holy Ghost has thought fit to compare this. The *union* of the members of the body with the head, is the ground of their partaking of the life of the head; it is the *union* of the branches to the stock, which is the ground of their partaking of the sap and life of the stock; it is the *relation* of the wife to the husband, that is the ground of her joint interest in his estate; they are looked upon, in several respects, as one in law. So there is a legal union between Christ and true Christians; so that (as all except Socinians allow) one, in some respects, is accepted for the other by the supreme judge.

3.) And thus it is that faith is the qualification in any person that renders it meet in the sight of God that he should be looked upon as having Christ's satisfaction and righteousness belonging to him, viz. because it is that in him which, *on his part*, makes up this union between him and Christ. By what has been just now observed, it is a person's being, according to scripture phrase, *in Christ*, that is the ground of having his satisfaction and merits belonging to him, and a right to the benefits procured thereby. The reason of it is plain; it is easy to see how our having Christ's merits and benefits belonging to us, follows from our having (if I may so speak) *Christ himself* belonging to us, or our being united to him. And if so, it must also be easy to see how, or in what manner, that in a person, which *on his part* makes up the *union* between his soul and Christ, should be the thing on the account of which God looks on it as meet that he should have Christ's merits belonging to him. It is a very different thing for God to assign to a particular person a right to Christ's merits and benefits from regard to a qualification in him in this respect, from his doing it for him out of respect to the *value* or loveliness of that qualification, or as a reward of its excellency.

As there is nobody but what will allow that there is a peculiar *relation* between Christ and his true disciples, by which

the *vital union* between Christ and his people, first, on *his part*, and secondly, on *their part*, is founded on scripture and the reason of the thing; and the former is the *cause* of the latter. And therefore, as the cause must ever *precede* the effect, the *first* union not only *may* be prior to the *second*, as in the *case* of happy infants, but also *must* be so in the case of adults. W.

they are in some sense in scripture said to be *one*; so I suppose there is nobody but what will allow, that there may be something that the true Christian does *on his part*, whereby he is *active* in coming into this relation or union; some *uniting* act, or that which is done towards this union or relation (or whatever any please to call it) *on the Christian's part*. Now faith I suppose to be this act.

I do not now pretend to define justifying faith, or to determine precisely how much is contained in it, but only to determine thus much concerning it, viz. That it is that by which the soul, which before was separate and alienated from Christ, unites itself to him, or ceases to be any longer in that state of alienation, and comes into that fore-mentioned union or relation to him; or, to use the scripture phrase, it is that by which the soul comes to Christ, and *receives* him: and this is evident by the scriptures using these very expressions to signify faith. John, vi. 35—39. "He that *cometh* to me, shall never hunger; and he that *believeth* on me, shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not. All that the Father giveth me, shall *come to* me; and him that *cometh to* me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Ver. 40. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and *believeth* on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Chap. v. 38—40.——"Whom he hath sent, him ye *believe* not. Search the scriptures, for—they are they which testify of me. And ye will not *come unto me*, that ye might have life." Ver. 43, 44. I am come in my Father's name, and ye *receive* me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will *receive*. How can ye *believe*, which receive honour one of another—?" Chap. i. 12. "But as many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name." If it be said that these are obscure figures of speech, which, however they might be well understood of old among those who commonly used such metaphors, are with difficulty understood now. I allow, that the expressions of *receiving* Christ and *coming* to Christ, are metaphorical expressions; and if I should allow them to be obscure metaphors, yet thus much at least is certainly plain in them, viz. that faith is that by which those who before were separated, and at a distance from Christ, (that is to say, were not so related and united to him as his people are), cease to be any longer at such a distance, and come into

that relation and nearness; unless they are so unintelligible, that nothing at all can be understood by them.

God does not give those that believe an union with or an interest in the Saviour as a *reward* for faith, but only because faith is the soul's *active* uniting with Christ, or is itself the very act of unition, *on their part.* God sees it fit, that in order to an union being established between two intelligent active beings or persons, so as that they should be looked upon as one, there should be the mutual act of both, that each should receive other, as actively joining themselves one to another. God, in requiring this in order to an union with Christ as one of his people, treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of act and choice; and hence sees it fit that they only who are one with Christ by their own act, should be looked upon as one *in law.* What is *real* in the union between Christ and his people, is the foundation of what is *legal;* that is, it is something really in them, and between them, uniting them, that is the ground of the suitableness of their being accounted as one by the judge. And if there be any *act* or qualification in believers of that uniting nature, that it is meet on that account the judge should look upon them and accept them as one, no wonder that upon the account of the same act or qualificatiou, he should accept the satisfaction and merits of the one for the other, as if these were their own satisfaction and merits. This necessarily follows, or rather is implied.

And thus it is that faith justifies, or gives an interest in Christ's satisfaction and merits, and a right to the benefits procured thereby, viz. as it thus makes Christ and the believer *one* in the acceptance of the supreme Judge. It is by faith that we have a title to eternal life, because it is by faith that we have the Son of God, by whom life is. The apostle John in these words, 1 John, v. 12. "He that hath the Son, hath life," seems evidently to have respect to those words of Christ of which he gives an account in his gospel, chap. iii. 36. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life." And where the scripture speaks of faith as the soul's receiving or coming to Christ, it also speaks of this receiving, coming to, or joining with Christ, as the ground of an interest in his benefits. To as many as received him, "to them gave he power" to become the sons of God. Ye will not come unto me "that ye might have life." And there is a wide difference between its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs who believe, because an interest in that satisfaction and

merit is a fit *reward* of faith—or a suitable testimony of God's respect to the amiableness and excellency of that grace—and its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs, because Christ and they are so united, that in the eyes of the Judge they may be looked upon and taken as one.

Although, on account of faith in the believer, it is in the sight of God fit and congruous, both that he who believes should be looked upon as in Christ, and also as having an interest in his merits, in the way that has been now explained; yet it appears that this is very wide from a *merit of congruity*, or indeed any *moral* congruity at all to either.* There is a

* The term here used, "*moral* congruity," is not happily chosen. Indeed our author, in the next sentence, professes himself to be *at a loss* what terms to use which may clearly convey the necessary distinction. By "*moral*" congruity or fitness he seems to mean *personal perfection*, or a perfection of state personally considered, without relation to a surety, or the righteousness which God has provided. But this is an acceptation of the term "moral" so unusual as to throw great perplexity into the argument. Beside, when *contrasted* with *believing*, it leads the reader to suppose that *to believe* is not a *moral act*. But the supposition that "believing with the heart unto righteousness" is not a *moral* act, as contradistinguished from a *natural* one, leads to an endless confusion of ideas. Surely, to *believe* God's testimony concerning his Son and his righteousness is, if any thing be, a *moral* act of obedience to divine authority. How then can it be called a *natural* fitness only, as contrasted with what is *moral*? Nor is the distinction at all necessary in order to avoid the apprehended consequence of assigning to faith any *merit* of congruity. A few observations on this intricate subject may probably assist the reader in seeking scriptural and consistent notions.

1. Justification implies a *charge*, a *plea*, and a virtual declaration of *approval*.

2. The *charge* against Adam and all his posterity is two-fold, including a breach of *covenant*, or a failure in federal *perfection*; and also *disobedience* in transgressing a divine *rule*. These considerations are perfectly distinct in their nature. A rule may be momentarily transgressed for a long series of years, as it was by Adam, and constantly is by his rebellious descendants, but a federal failure was, from the nature of perfect righteousness, the *very first act* of delinquency.

3. No *plea* can be valid against a *federal* delinquency, as was the case in Adam, but a participation of a *federal perfection*. Nothing less can answer the charge, and nothing more is requisite. This averts condemnation, and entitles to a virtual *approval* in reference to *that part* of the charge.

4. No *plea* can be valid against *disobedience* to divine authority, or the *rule* of moral government, but a *personal*, voluntary, actual compliance with that authoritative rule of government; which we find by divine revelation to be, in reference to fallen man, *submission* to the righteousness of God; or, as differently expressed, *believing* on the Son of God, *receiving* him as the Lord *our righteousness*, &c.

5. No man has possessed a *federal perfection*, except by *imputation*, beside the first Adam while he obeyed without failure, and the second Adam when he had completed his work of humiliation. For no eminence of grace in a mere descendant of Adam could possibly attain to federal perfection, from the very nature of such perfection. Nor indeed can the perfect obedience of glorified saints rise higher than a conformity to the divine law as a *rule*; their federal perfection is still derived from their *union* to Christ, and a consequent *imputation*, which implies a virtual *approval*. Hence,

6. The *federal perfection* of Messiah is the proper and *sole ground* of an actual interest in reconciliation and justification. In other words, the righteousness of Christ, his perfect obedience unto death as our substitute, is that *alone* on account of which we can stand before God with acceptance, in reference to the charge of a federal failure in Adam.

7. An *actual interest* in this federal perfection is obtained only by a *vital* or an *effectual union* to the Lord our righteousness. This is plain from scripture, and is perfectly rational. It is compared to the union of a vine and its branches, the head and members of

twofold fitness to a state; I know not how to give them distinguishing names, otherwise than by calling the one a *moral*, and the other a *natural* fitness. A person has a moral fitness

the human body, &c. That a participation of nature between Christ and us, or an effectual *union*, is requisite for a ground of imputation is evident, not only from scriptural comparisons, and the rational consistence of such an idea, but also from the fact of the Saviour's *incarnation*. Without *this union* to us, our sin could not have been *imputed* to him; and without a vital union, his righteousness could not be imputed to us. This is fairly and fully implied in many parts of scripture, as might be shewn if necessary.—From whence it is plain, that *union* is the indispensable ground of *imputation*.

8. Whoever is the subject of a *vital union* to Christ, is in a *justified* state, as partaker of a *federal perfection*, prior to the performance of any moral duty whatever. But in order to explain and prove this it is requisite to attend to the following particulars.

9. Union to Christ is of *two kinds*, on *his* part by his SPIRIT; and on *our* part by FAITH, as explained in a preceding note. In the former, we are *passive*; and in the latter, we are *active*. In the one, *he acts* as a sovereign dispenser of benefits; in the other *we act* as accountable creatures.

10. By the order both of nature and of time, the *union* begins with *him* who is a quickening spirit; and that of faith is consequent upon the other, and is the proper *effect* of it.

11. By *his* uniting act, which may be termed effectual calling, the enmity of sin is destroyed in the soul, and the spirit of Christ is imparted, which as occasion offers, will manifest itself as the spirit of faith, of love, &c. Hence,

12. To the soul *thus* in Christ, whether infant or adult, there is no condemnation arising from federal delinquency; for this charge is answered by the *union* on his part; and righteousness is imputed.

13. From the premises it follows, that the generally received theological maxim is perfectly just and plain, *viz.* that justification and regeneration are *simultaneous*.—*Union* is the immediate cause of both; and because the one is a *relative* and the other a *vital* effect, there is no interference as to the order of time. Thus a union of a tree and a branch by ingrafture, is attended with two *simultaneous* effects, the one *relative* and the other *vital*; it is *related* to the tree as a branch, and at the same time partakes of the vital sap. The union however, must precede both, as to nature and time.

14. But where two effects are *both real*, as distinguished from *relative*, the one *must* precede the other, both as to nature and time. Thus union precedes vitality, and this of necessity must precede vital acts; and *regeneration*, as the act of the Spirit of Christ, must necessarily precede *believing*, which is one mode by which a vital principle *operates*. For to suppose that the operation produces, or is prior to the principle, either in nature or in time, is a direct contradiction.

15. If the preceding steps of these remarks be thoroughly weighed, it will be found, that justification, according to scripture and just reasoning upon it, has for its *foundation* the federal perfection of Messiah, and takes place as the immediate *result* of union to him.

16. But since union is *two-fold*, the one as the *effect* of the other, that is, union by *faith* is the effect of union by the Spirit of Christ, and these, *cause and effect*, cannot possibly be sumultaneous, there must necessarily be a *two-fold justification* as the result of the corresponding unions. Though in that union which is first in the order of nature and of time, the person, whether infant or adult, is *passive*; the result however is the imputation of righteousness, which is Messiah's federal perfection, and which entitles to life eternal. And by that union which is the effect of the other, and consequently posterior to it in the order both of nature and of time, (and of which infants *cannot* be partakers) that is, by the union effected by believing, the *result* is the *imputation* of the *same righteousness* in circumstances totally different.

17. These two different circumstances, clearly perceived, will develope the seeming difficulty. In the first, the person, whether infant or adult, is the *passive possessor* of decreed benefits, union, righteousness, and life; in the second circumstance, the adult person, as a free and accountable agent, is required to *determine for himself* on what to found his plea of acceptance with God. If he found his plea on his own *obedience* past or intended, whether moral, ceremonial, or both; he shews at once both *ignorance* and *rebellion*.

for a state, when his moral excellency commends him to it, or when his being put into such a good state is but a suitable testimony of regard to the moral excellency, or value, or amia-

Ignorance, that he supposes it even possible for him, by his own obedience, to attain to that federal perfection which is justly required by the righteous Governor; and also in that he does not perceive the love and wisdom, the superabounding grace and wonderful mercy of God as a sovereign Benefactor in providing the needful remedy. *Rebellion*, in that he rejects the counsel of God, and resists, by obstinate unbelief, the divine *authority* requiring submission to this righteousness as the way to favour and life. Hence,

18. As all reasonings, expostulations, threats, promises and encouragements; all testimonies, declarations, appeals, inducements, and sanctions, are addressed to men as *moral agents*, with whom, in the business of accountability, it rests, what mode they will adopt for obtaining acceptance with God—whether by *doing* the work themselves, or by *believing* his testimony and receiving his gift—it fully accounts for *justification by faith* being the great point argued in the apostolic writings.

19. And it further appears, that justification by *faith alone* should be strenuously urged by all gospel ministers, while they have to do continually with persons whose enquiry is, "What shall we *do* to be saved?" To such as thus *enquire* after the way of salvation, who *seek* acceptance with God, who are about to *choose* for themselves "the way they will take," what answer can be given, in effect, but what is contained in the apostle's words? "To him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The above statement not only *agrees* with these words, but also, as I humbly conceive, *explains* their import; and the embarrassment respecting the office and influence of faith in justification is removed, without expunging faith, or the act of believing, from the class of moral duties.

20. It may be objected, If there be any justification *before* believing, then an *unbeliever* may be justified; whereas the scripture saith, "He that believeth not is condemned already." This objection arises from a mistaken notion of the true meaning of such passages of scripture. Condemnation, in the real import of scripture, is levelled against the *rejecters* of Christ, or of the divine testimony, and these *only*, considered as free agents in seeking acceptance with God and final happiness. These, *not believing* in Christ, while prevailingly devoted to Moses or Mahomet, moral obedience or ceremonies, or indeed any other object whatever, *reject* in fact the testimony of God and his righteousness, and expose themselves to a *double* condemnation. They are condemned as being *destitute* of a perfect righteousness, and also for their actual *disobedience* to the divine authority. The sentence of the *law* is against them, both as a covenant and as a rule; and the *gospel* which they reject will be a witness to prove the wickedness of their heart. But this can never take place in one who is vitally united to Christ. All allow that *infants not believing* are not to be ranked with *unbelievers*. To them no testimony is proposed, and therefore no testimony is *rejected* by them. Nor does any *adult* united to Christ *reject* the divine testimony, even *before* he believes. Let but the *object* of faith be presented to him, and his vital union *secures* the *exercise* of the living principle towards the proposed object in proportion as the terms are understood. A testimony not *presented*, or one presented in an *unknown tongue*, cannot be believed, notwithstanding the principle of faith. The existence of a principle does not necessarily imply its exercise, whether it be sense, reason or faith. Men are not necessarily conversant with the objects of sense, *because* they possess the senses requisite for these purposes; nor are they always *exercising* the powers of the mind, however essential these powers are to human nature. In like manner, *not exercising* faith is a very different thing from not possessing the *principle*. A vital union and the *spirit* of faith are inseparably and *essentially* connected; but a vital union and believing are connected *secundum quid*, in *certain circumstances*. Without the circumstances of adult age, or a capacity of understanding, *believing* is impracticable. But how absurd would it be to say, that a sinner *cannot* be justified *because* he has not arrived at a certain advanced portion of *understanding*, or has not learned some *language*; as if a title to heaven depended on age, or knowing a language! And equally absurd is it to suppose that Christ *cannot* effect a vital union *because* the sinner's voluntary consent to it is wanting; as if God's high sovereignty were bound by the human will! That God *requires* the sinner's consent, as a matter of *obligation*, is a solemn fact; but God has not laid *himself* under any obligation that he will never unite a soul to Christ for justification of

bleness of any of his qualifications or acts. A person has a natural fitness for a state, when it appears meet and condecent that he should be in such a state or circumstances, only from the natural concord or agreeableness there is between such qualifications and such circumstances; not because the qualifications are lovely or unlovely, but only because the qualifications and the circumstances are like one another, or do in their nature suit and agree or unite one to another. And it is on this latter account only that God looks on it fit by a natural fitness, that he whose heart sincerely unites itself to Christ as his Saviour, should be looked upon as united to that Saviour, and so having an interest in him; and not from any moral fitness there is between the excellency of such a qualification as faith, and such a glorious blessedness as the having an interest in Christ. God's bestowing Christ and his benefits on a soul in consequence of faith, out of regard only to the natural concord there is between such a qualification of a soul, and such an union with Christ, and interest in him, makes the case very widely different from what it would be, if he bestowed this from regard to any moral suitableness. For, in the former case, it is only from God's love of order that he bestows these things on the account of faith: in the latter, God doth it out of love to the grace of faith itself. God will neither look on Christ's merits as ours, nor adjudge his benefits to us, till we be in

life but by the sinner's previous consent. He has declared, however, that the *continued unbeliever*, who is properly a wilful *rejecter* of Christ and his righteousness, shall be *condemned*. Hence it is evident, that to make believing *essential* to a vital union, on the part of Christ; and to make the *exercise* of faith on a divine testimony *essential* to its existence, are erroneous conclusions, derrogatory to gospel grace, and founded on wrong notions of moral government.

20. To make this, if possible, still more plain, the gospel finds men, as apostatized with Adam, in a state of *condemnation*; infants and adults alike are under the condemnatory sentence which is the result of a breach of covenant. This evil can be removed, and a restoration to favour be effected, only by an act of *sovereign grace*, whereby Christ becomes *vitally united* to the soul. Without this vital union there is, there can be no faith. This being the case, a vital union is formed *before* faith can have any ground of existence; and consequently a justification which is a *necessary result* of this union takes place. For to him who is thus in Christ Jesus there is *no condemnation*; but he is passed from death unto life, as an object of *mere grace and mercy*. In *this* respect, an adult and an infant are perfectly on a par, while justified and regenerated for the kingdom of God. But God, in the character of a *moral Governor*, has a further claim on every free agent; he exhibits to the view, and solicits, yea demands a *voluntary compliance* with the plan of mercy through the blessed Redeemer, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. The regenerate person that is capable of acting for himself, as the subject of commands and invitations, complies; he becomes an *active recipient* of the appointed righteousness, which he now *pleads* in opposition to all charges presented against him. By *faith* or believing God's testimony, he makes his appeal, and by faith alone he is *justified*. An investigation of the *rationale* of Christian doctrines is not necessary for *popular* use, but may be peculiarly useful as a *guard* against inconsistencies, and a means of strengthening our attachment to those doctrines. W.

Christ; nor will he look upon us as being in him, without an active unition of our hearts and souls to him; because he is a wise being, and delights in order, and not in confusion, and that things should be together or asunder according to their nature; and his making such a constitution is a testimony of his love of order.* Whereas if it were out of regard to any moral fitness or suitableness between faith and such blessedness, it would be a testimony of his love to the act or qualification itself. The one supposes this divine constitution to be a manifestation of God's regard to the beauty of the act of faith: the other only supposes it to be a manifestation of his regard to the beauty of that order that there is in uniting those things that have a natural agreement, and congruity, and unition of the one with the other. Indeed a moral suitableness or fitness to a state includes a natural: for, if there be a moral suitableness that a person should be in such a state, there is also a natural suitableness; but such a natural suitableness as I have described, by no means necessarily includes a moral.

This is plainly what our divines intend when they say, that faith does not justify as a *work*, or a righteousness, viz. that it does not justify as a part of our moral goodness or excellency, or that it does not justify as man was to have been justified by the covenant of works, which was, to have a title to eternal life given him of God, in testimony of his pleasedness with his works, or his regard to the inherent excellency and beauty of his obedience. And this is certainly what the apostle Paul means, when he so much insists upon it, that we are not justified by works, viz. that we are not justified by them as good works, or by any goodness, value, or excellency of our works. For the proof of this I shall at present mention but one thing, and that is, the apostle from time to time speaking of our not being justified by works, as the thing that excludes all boasting, Eph. ii. 9 Rom. iii. 27. and chap. iv. 2. Now which way do works give occasion for boasting, but as good? What do men use to boast of, but of some-

* This order, however, is a *law* to us, and compliance with it necessarily imports *moral* obedience; though the *object* received is the obedience of another. No one has room to expect success in his endeavours, but by complying with the divine requisition; and that requisition is, that we *submit* to the perfection of Messiah. And an act of submission to the righteousness of faith may well be an act of moral excellence, though that excellence has nothing *meretorious* on account of which a perfect righteousness should be imputed. A thing may have moral *goodness* without moral *perfection*. But in order to deny to faith the latter, it is not necessary to deprive it of the former. If we consistently maintain, that the moral excellence of faith constitutes *no part* of our justifying rightcousness, it is all that the argument requires, in order to establish the conclusion intended. W.

thing they suppose good or excellent? And on what account do they boast of any thing, but for the supposed excellency that is in it?

From these things we may learn in what manner faith is the only condition of justification and salvation. For though it be not the only condition, so as alone truly to have the place of a condition in an hypothetical proposition, in which justification and salvation are the consequent, yet it is the condition of justification in a manner peculiar to it, and so that nothing else has a parallel influence with it; because faith includes the whole act of unition to Christ as a Saviour. The entire active uniting of the soul, or the whole of what is called coming to Christ, and receiving of him, is called faith in scripture; and however other things may be no less excellent than faith, yet it is not the nature of any other graces or virtues directly to close with Christ as a mediator, any further than they enter into the constitution of justifying faith, and do belong to its nature.

Thus I have explained my meaning, in asserting it as a doctrine of the gospel, that we are justified by *faith only*, without any manner of goodness of our own.

I now proceed in the

II. Place, to the proof of it; which I shall endeavour to produce in the following arguments.

First. Such is our case, and the state of things, that neither faith, nor any other qualification, or act or course of acts, does or can render it suitable that a person should have an interest in the Saviour, and so a title to his benefits, on account of any excellency therein, or any other way, than as something in him may unite him to the Saviour. It is not suitable that God should give fallen man an interest in Christ and his merits, as a testimony of his respect to any thing whatsoever as a loveliness in him; and that because it is not meet, till a sinner is actually justified that any thing in him should be accepted of God, as any excellency or amiableness of his person; or that God, by any act, should in any manner or degree testify any pleasedness with him, or favour towards him, on the account of any thing inherent in him: and that for two reasons:

1. That nature of things will not admit of it. And this appears from the infinite guilt that the sinner till justified is under; which arises from the infinite evil or heinousness of sin. But because this is what some deny, I would therefore first establish

that point, and shew that sin is a thing that is indeed properly of infinite heinousness; and then shew the consequence, that it cannot be suitable, till the sinner is actually justified, that God should by any act testify pleasedness with or acceptance of any excellency or amiableness of his person.

That the evil and demerit of sin is infinitely great, is most demonstrably evident, because what the evil or iniquity of sin consists in, is the violating of an obligation, or doing what we should not do; and therefore by how much the greater the obligation is that is violated, by so much the greater is the iniquity of the violation. But certainly our obligation to love or honour any being is great in proportion to the greatness or excellency of that being, or his worthiness to be loved and honoured. We are under greater obligations to love a more lovely being than a less lovely; and if a being be infinitely excellent and lovely, our obligations to love him are therein infinitely great. The matter is so plain, it seems needless to say much about it.

Some have argued exceeding strangely against the infinite evil of sin, from its being committed against an infinite object, that then it may as well be argued, that there is also an infinite value or worthiness in holiness and love to God, because that also has an infinite object; whereas the argument, from parity of reason, will carry it in the reverse. The sin of the creature against God is ill deserving in proportion to the distance there is between God and the creature; the greatness of the object, and the meanness of the subject, aggravates it. But it is the reverse with regard to the worthiness of the respect of the creature to God; it is worthless, (and not worthy) in proportion to the meanness of the subject. So much the greater the distance between God and the creature, so much the less is the creature's respect worthy of God's notice or regard. The unworthiness of sin or opposition to God rises and is great in proportion to the dignity of the object and inferiority of the subject; but on the contrary, the value of respect rises in proportion to the value of the subject; and that for this plain reason, *viz.* that the evil of disrespect is in proportion to the obligation that lies upon the subject to the object; which obligation is most evidently increased by the excellency and superiority of the object. But on the contrary, the worthiness of respect to a being is in proportion to the obligation that lies on him who is the object, (or rather the reason he has) to regard the subject, which certainly is in proportion to the subject's value or excellency. Sin or disrespect is evil or heinous in proportion to the

degree of what it denies in the object, and as it were takes from it, viz. its excellency and worthiness of respect; on the contrary, respect is valuable in proportion to the value of what is given to the object in that respect, which undoubtedly (other things being equal) is great in proportion to the subject's value, or worthiness of regard; because the subject in giving his respect, can give no more than himself: so far as he gives his respect, he gives himself to the object; and therefore his gift is of greater or lesser value in proportion to the value of himself.

Hence, (by the way), the love, honour, and obedience of Christ towards God, has infinite value, from the excellency and dignity of the person in whom these qualifications were inherent; and the reason why we needed a person of infinite dignity to obey for us, was because of our infinite comparative meanness, who had disobeyed, whereby our disobedience was infinitely aggravated. We needed one, the worthiness of whose obedience might be answerable to the unworthiness of our disobedience; and therefore needed one who was as great and worthy as we were unworthy.

Another objection (that perhaps may be thought hardly worth mentioning) is, that to suppose sin to be infinitely heinous, is to make all sins equally heinous; for how can any sin be more than infinitely heinous? But all that can be argued hence is, that no sin can be greater with respect to that aggravation, the worthiness of the object against whom it is committed. One sin cannot be more aggravated than another in *that* respect, because the aggravation of every sin is infinite; but that does not hinder, that some sins may be more heinous than others in *other* respects: as if we should suppose a cylinder infinitely long, it cannot be greater in that respect, viz. with respect to the length of it; but yet it may be doubled and trebled, and made a thousand fold more, by the increase of other dimensions. Of sins that are all infinitely heinous, some may be more heinous than others; as well as of divers punishments that are all infinitely dreadful calamities, or all of them infinitely exceeding all finite calamities, so that there is no finite calamity, however great, but what is infinitely less dreadful, or more eligible than any of them, yet some of them may be a thousand times more dreadful than others. A punishment may be infinitely dreadful by reason of the infinite duration of it; and therefore cannot be greater with respect to *that* aggravation of it, viz. its length of continuance, but yet may be vastly more terrible on other accounts.

Having thus, as I imagine, made it clear, that all sin is infinitely heinous, and consequently that the sinner, before he

is justified, is under infinite guilt in God's sight; it now remains that I shew the consequence, or how it follows from hence, that it is not suitable that God should give the sinner an interest in Christ's merits, and so a title to his benefits, from regard to any qualification, or act, or course of acts in him, on the account of any excellency or goodness whatsoever therein, but only as uniting to Christ; or (which fully implies it) that it is not suitable that God, by any act, should, in any manner or degree, testify any acceptance of, or pleasedness with any thing, as any virtue, or excellency, or any part of loveliness, or valuableness in his person, until he is actually already interested in Christ's merits. From the premises it follows, that before the sinner is already interested in Christ, and justified, it is impossible God should have any acceptance of, or pleasedness with the person of the sinner, as in any degree lovely in his sight, or indeed less the object of his displeasure and wrath. For, by the supposition, the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in the sight of God; for guilt is not removed but by pardon: but to suppose the sinner already pardoned, is to suppose him already justified; which is contrary to the supposition. But if the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in God's sight, that is the same thing as still to be beheld of God as infinitely the object of his displeasure and wrath, or infinitely hateful in his eyes; and if so, where is any room for any thing in him, to be accepted as some valuableness or acceptableness of him in God's sight, or for any act of favour of any kind towards him, or any gift whatsoever to him, in testimony of God's respect to and acceptance of something of him lovely and pleasing? If we should suppose that a sinner could have faith, or some other grace in his heart, and yet remain separate from Christ; and that he is not looked upon as being in Christ, or having any relation to him, it would not be meet that such true grace should be accepted of God as any loveliness of his person in the sight of God. If it should be accepted as the loveliness of the person, that would be to accept the person as in some degree lovely to God; but this cannot be consistent with his still remaining under infinite guilt, or infinite unworthiness in God's sight, which that goodness has no worthiness to balance. While God beholds the man as separate from Christ, he must behold him as he is in himself; and so his goodness cannot be beheld by God, but as taken with his guilt and hatefulness, and as put in the scales with it; and so his goodness is nothing; because there is a finite on the balance against an infinite whose proportion to it is nothing. In such a case, if the man be looked on as he is in himself, the excess of the

weight in one scale above another, must be looked upon as the quality of the man. These contraries being beheld together, one takes from another, as one number is substracted from another? and the man must be looked upon in God's sight according to the remainder. For here, by the supposition, all acts of grace or favour, in not imputing the guilt as it is, are excluded, because that supposes a degree of pardon, and that supposes justification which is contrary to what is supposed, viz. that the sinner is not already justified; and therefore things must be taken strictly as they are; and so the man is still infinitely unworthy and hateful in God's sight, as he was before, without diminution, because his goodness bears no proportion to his unworthiness, and therefore when taken together is nothing.

Hence may be more clearly seen the force of that expression in the text, of believing on him that *justifieth the ungodly*; for though there is indeed something in man that is really and spiritually good, prior to justification, yet there is nothing that is accepted as any godliness or excellency of the person, till after justification. Goodness or loveliness of the person in the acceptance of God, in any degree, is not to be considered as prior but posterior in the order and method of God's proceeding in this affair. Though a respect to the natural suitableness between such a qualification, and such a state, does go before justification, yet the acceptance even of faith as any goodness or loveliness of the believer, follows justification. The goodness is on the forementioned account justly looked upon as nothing, until the man is justified: And therefore the man is respected in justification, as in himself altogether hateful.—Thus the nature of things will not admit of a man having an interest given him in the merits or benefits of a Saviour, on the account of any thing as a righteousness, or a virtue, or excellency in him.

2. A divine constitution antecedent to that which establishes justification by a Saviour, (and indeed to any need of a Saviour,) stands in the way of it, viz. that original constitution or law which man was put under; by which constitution or law the sinner is condemned, because he is a violator of that law; and stands condemned, till he has actually an interest in the Saviour, through whom he is set at liberty from that condemnation. But to suppose that God gives a man an interest in Christ in *reward* for his righteousness or virtue, is inconsistent with his still remaining under condemnation till he has an interest in Christ; because it supposes, that the sinner's virtue is

accepted, and he accepted for it, before he has an interest in Christ; inasmuch as an interest in Christ is given as a reward of his virtue. But the virtue must first be accepted, before it is rewarded, and the man must first be accepted for his virtue before he is rewarded for it with so great and glorious a reward; for the very notion of a reward, is some good bestowed in testimony of respect to and acceptance of virtue in the person rewarded. It does not consist with the honour of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth, to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed. And then, such acceptance is inconsistent with, and contradictory to such remaining condemnation; for the law condemns him that violates it, to be totally rejected and cast off by God. But how can a man continue under this condemnation, i. e. continue utterly rejected and cast off by God, and yet his righteousness or virtue be accepted, and he himself accepted on the account of it, so as to have so glorious a reward as an interest in Christ bestowed as a testimony of that acceptance?

I know that the answer will be, that we now are not subject to that constitution which mankind were at first put under; but that God, in mercy to mankind, has abolished that rigorous constitution, and put us under a new law, and introduced a more mild constitution; and that the constitution or law itself not remaining, there is no need of supposing that the condemnation of it remains, to stand in the way of the acceptance of our virtue. And indeed there is no other way of avoiding this difficulty. The condemnation of the law must stand in force against a man, till he is actually interested in the Saviour who has satisfied and answered the law, so as effectually to prevent any acceptance of his virtue, either before, or even in order to such an interest, unless the law or constitution itself be abolished. But the scheme of those modern divines by whom this is maintained, seems to contain a great deal of absurdity and self-contradiction: they hold, that the old law given to Adam, which requires perfect obedience, is entirely repealed, and that instead of it we are put under a new law, which requires no more than imperfect sincere obedience, in compliance with our poor, infirm, impotent circumstances since the fall, whereby we are unable to perform that perfect obedience that was required by the first law: for they strenuously maintain, that it would be unjust in God to require any thing of us that is beyond our present power and ability to perform; and yet they hold, that Christ died to satisfy for the imperfections of our

obedience, that so our imperfect obedience might be accepted instead of perfect. Now, how can these things hang together? I would ask, What law these imperfections of our obedience are a breach of? If they are a breach of no law, then they are not sins; and if they be not sins, what need of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? but if they are sins, and so the breach of some law, what law is it? they cannot be a breach of their new law, for that requires no other than imperfect obedience, or obedience with imperfections; and they cannot be a breach of the old law, for that they say is entirely abolished, and we never were under it; and we cannot break a law that we never were under. They say it would not be just in God to exact of us perfect obedience, because it would not be just in God to require more of us than we can perform in our present state, and to punish us for failing of it; and therefore, by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. What need therefore of Christ's dying to satify for them? What need of Christ's suffering to satisfy for that which is no fault, and in its own nature deserves no suffering? What need of Christ's dying to purchase that our imperfect obedience should be accepted, when according to their scheme it would be unjust in itself that any other obedience than imperfect should be required? What need of Christ's dying to make way for God's accepting such an obedience, as it would in itself be unjust in him not to accept? Is there any need of Christ's dying to persuade God not to do unjustly? If it be said, that Christ died to satisfy that law for us, that so we might not be under that law, but might be delivered from it, that so there might be room for us to be under a more mild law; still I would inquire, What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that (according to their scheme) it would in itself be unjust that we should be under, because in our present state we are not able to keep it? What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that it would be unjust that we should be under, whether Christ died or no?

Thus far I have argued principally from reason, and the nature of things:—I proceed now to the

Second argument, which is, That this is a doctrine which the holy Scriptures, the revelation that God has given us of his mind and will—by which alone we can never come to know how those who have offended God can come to be accepted of him, and justified in his sight—is exceeding full. The Apostle Paul is abundant in teaching, that "we are justified by faith alone, without the works of the law?" There is no one doc-

trine that he insists so much upon, and that he handles with so much distinctness, explaining, giving reasons, and answering objections.

Here it is not denied by any, that the apostle does assert, that we are justified by faith, without the works of the law, because the words are express; but only it is said, that we take his words wrong, and understand that by them that never entered into his heart, in that when he excludes the works of the law, we understand him of the whole law of God, or the rule which he has given to mankind to walk by; whereas all that he intends is the ceremonial law.

Some that oppose this doctrine indeed say, that the apostle sometimes means that it is by faith, i. e. an hearty embracing the gospel in its first act only, or without any preceding holy life, that persons are admitted into a justified state; but, say they, it is by a persevering obedience that they are continued in a justified state, and it is by this that they are finally justified. But this is the same thing as to say, that a man on his first embracing the gospel is conditionally justified and pardoned. To pardon sin, is to free the sinner from the punishment of it, or from that eternal misery that is due to it; and therefore if a person is pardoned, or freed from this misery, on his first embracing the gospel, and yet not finally freed, but his actual freedom still depends on some condition yet to be performed, it is inconceivable how he can be pardoned otherwise than conditionally; that is, he is not properly actually pardoned, and freed from punishment, but only he has God's promise that he shall be pardoned on future conditions. God promises him, that now, if he perseveres in obedience, he shall be finally pardoned, or actually freed from hell; which is to make just nothing at all of the apostle's great doctrine of justification by faith alone. Such a conditional pardon is no pardon or justification at all, any more than all mankind have, whether they embrace the gospel or no; for they all have a promise of final justification on conditions of future sincere obedience, as much as he that embraces the gospel. But not to dispute about this, we will suppose that there may be something or other at the sinner's first embracing the gospel, that may properly be called justification or pardon, and yet that final justification, or real freedom from the punishment of sin, is still suspended on conditions hitherto unfulfilled; yet they who hold that sinners are thus justified on embracing the gospel, suppose that they are justified by this, no otherwise than as it is a leading act of obedience, or at least as virtue and moral goodness in them, and therefore would be excluded by the apostle as much

as any other virtue or obedience, if it be allowed that he means the moral law, when he excludes works of the law. And therefore, if that point be yielded, that the apostle means the moral, and not only the ceremonial law, their whole scheme falls to the ground.

And because the issue of the whole argument from those texts in St. Paul's epistles depends on the determination of this point, I would be particular in the discussion of it.

Some of our opponents in this doctrine of justification, when they deny, that by the law the apostle means the moral law, or the whole rule of life which God has given to mankind, seem to chuse to express themselves thus, that the apostle only intends the Mosaic dispensation. But this comes to just the same thing as if they said, that the apostle only means to exclude the works of the ceremonial law; for when they say, that it is intended only that we are not justified by the works of the Mosaic dispensation, if they mean any thing by it, it must be, that we are not justified by attending and observing what is Mosaic in that dispensation, or by what was peculiar to it, and wherein it differed from the Christian dispensation; which is the same as that which is ceremonial and positive, and not moral, in that administration. So that this is what I have to disprove, viz. that the apostle, when he speaks of works of the law in this affair, means only works of the ceremonial law, or those observances that were peculiar to the Mosaic administration.

And here it must be noted, that no body controverts it with them, whether the works of the ceremonial law be not included, or whether the apostle does not particularly argue against justification by circumcision, and other ceremonial observances; but all in question is, whether, when he denies justification by works of the law, he is to be understood only of the ceremonial law, or whether the moral law be not also implied and intended; and therefore those arguments which are brought to prove that the apostle meant the ceremonial law, are nothing to the purpose, unless they prove that the apostle meant those *only*.

What is much insisted on is, that it was the judaising Christians being so fond of circumcision, and other ceremonies of the law, and depending so much on them, which was the very occasion of the apostle's writing as he does against justification by the works of the law. But supposing it were so, that their trusting in works of the ceremonial law were the sole

occasion of the apostle's writing, (which yet there is no reason to allow, as may appear afterwards); if their trusting in a particular work, as a work of righteousness, was all that gave occasion to the apostle to write, how does it follow, that therefore the apostle did not upon that occasion write against trusting in *all works* of righteousness whatsoever? Where is the absurdity of supposing that the apostle might take occasion, from his observing some to trust in a certain work as a work of righteousness, to write to them against persons trusting in any works of righteousness at all, and that it was a very proper occasion too? Yea, it would have been unavoidable for the apostle to have argued against trusting in a particular work, in the quality of a work of righteousness, which quality was general, but he must therein argue against trusting in works of righteousness in general. Supposing it had been some other particular sort of works that was the occasion of the apostle's writing, as for instance, works of charity, and the apostle should hence take occasion to write to them not to trust in their works, could the apostle by that be understood of no other works besides works of charity? Would it have been absurd to understand him as writing against trusting in any work at all, because it was their trusting to a particular work that gave occasion to his writing?

Another thing alledged, as an evidence that the apostle means the ceremonial law—when he says, we cannot be justified by the works of the law—is, that he uses this argument to prove it, viz. that the law he speaks of was given so long after the covenent with Abraham, in Gal. iii. 17. "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." But, say they, it was only the Mosaic administration, and not the covenant of works, that was given so long after. But the apostle's argument seems manifestly to be mistaken by them. The apostles does not speak of a law that began to exist four hundred and thirty years after; if he did, there would be some force in their objection; but he has respect to a certain solemn transaction, well known among the Jews by the phrase "the giving of the law," which was at mount Sinai, (Exod. xix. xx.) consisting especially in God's giving the ten commandments (which is the moral law,) with a terrible voice, which law he afterwards gave in tables of stone. This transaction the Jews in the apostle's time misinterpreted; they looked upon it as God's establishing that law as a rule of justification. Against this conceit of theirs the apostle brings this invincible

argument, viz. that God would never go about to disannul his covenant with Abraham, which was plainly a covenant of grace, by a transaction with his posterity, that was so long after it, and was plainly built upon it. He would not overthrow a covenant of grace that he had long before established with Abraham, for him and his seed, (which is often mentioned as the ground of God's making them his people), by now establishing a covenant of works with them at Mount Sinai, as the Jews and judaising christians supposed.

But that the apostle does not mean only works of the ceremonial law, when he excludes works of the law in justification, but also of the moral law, and all works of obedience, virtue, and righteousness whatsoever, may appear by the following things.

1. The apostle does not only say, that we are not justified by the works of the law, but that we are not justified by *works*, using a general term; as in our text, *to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth*, &c.; and in the 6th verse, "God imputeth righteousness without works;" and chap. xi. 6. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." So, Eph. ii. 8. 9. For by grace are ye saved, through faith,——"not of works;" by which, there is no reason in the world to understand the apostle of any other than works in general, as correlates of a reward, or good works, or works of virtue and righteousness. When the apostle says, we are justified or saved not by works, without any such term annexed, as the law, or any other addition, to limit the expression, what warrant have any to confine it to works of a particular law or institution, excluding others? Are not observances of other divine laws works, as well as of that? It seems to be allowed by the divines in the Arminian scheme, in their interpretation of several of those texts where the apostle only mentions works, without any addition, that he means our own good works in general; but then, they say, he only means to exclude any proper merit in those works. But to say the apostle means one thing when he says, we are not justified by works, and another when he says, we are not justified by the works of the law, when we find the expressions mixed and used in the same discourse, and when the apostle is evidently upon the same argument, is very unreasonable; it is to dodge, and fly from Scripture, rather than to open and yield ourselves to its teachings.

2. In the third chapter of Romans, our having been guilty

of breaches of the moral law, is an argument that the apostle uses, why we cannot be justified by the works of the law. Beginning with the 9th verse, he proves out of the Old Testament, that all are under sin: "There is none righteous, no not one: Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; and their feet swift to shed blood." And so he goes on, mentioning only those things that are breaches of the moral law; and then when he has done, his conclusion is, in the 19th and 20th verses, "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified in his sight." This is most evidently his argument, because all had sinned, (as it was said in the 9th verse), and been guilty of those breaches of the moral law that he had mentioned, (and it is repeated over again, verse 23.) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" therefore none at all can be justified by the deeds of the law. Now if the apostle meant only, that we are not justified by the deeds of the ceremonial law, what kind of arguing would that be: "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood?" therefore they cannot be justified by the deeds of the Mosaic administration. They are guilty of the breaches of the moral law; and therefore they cannot be justified by the deeds of the ceremonial law! Doubtless, the apostle's argument is, that the very same law they have broken, can never justify them as observers of it, because every law necessarily condemns its violators. And therefore our breaches of the moral law argue no more, than that we cannot be justified by that law we have broken.

And it may be noted, that the apostle's argument here is the same that I have already used, viz. that as we are in ourselves, and out of Christ, we are under the condemnation of that original law or constitution that God established with mankind; and therefore it is no way fit that any thing we do, any virtue or obedience of ours, should be accepted, or we accepted on the account of it.

3. The apostle, in all the preceding part of this epistle, where-ever he has the phrase, *the law*, evidently intends the moral law principally. As in the 12th verse of the foregoing chapter: "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law." It is evidently the written moral law the apostle means, by the next verse but one: "For when the

Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law;" that is, the moral law that the Gentiles have by nature. And so the next verse, "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts." It is the moral law, and not the ceremonial, that is written in the hearts of those who are destitute of divine revelation. And so in the 18th verse, "Thou approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law." It is the moral law that shews us the nature of things, and teaches us what is excellent; 20th verse, "Thou hast a form of knowledge and truth in the law." It is the moral law, as is evident by what follows, verse 22, 23. "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?" Adultery, idolatry, and sacrilege, surely are the breaking of the moral, and not the ceremonial law. So in the 27th verse, "And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?" i. e. the Gentiles, that you despise because uncircumcised, if they live moral and holy lives, in obedience to the moral law, shall condemn you though circumcised. And so there is not one place in all the preceding part of the epistle, where the apostle speaks of the law, but that he most apparently intends principally the moral law; and yet when the apostle, in continuance of the same discourse, comes to tell us, that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, then they will needs have it, that he means only the ceremonial law. Yea, though all this discourse about the moral law, shewing how the Jews as well as Gentiles have violated it, is evidently preparatory and introductory to that doctrine, chap. iii. 20. "That no flesh" that is none of mankind, neither Jews nor Gentiles, "can be justified by the works of the law."

4. It is evident that when the apostle says, we cannot be justified by the works of the law, he means the moral as well as ceremonial law, by his giving this reason for it, that "by the law is the knowledge of sin," as Rom. iii. 20. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Now that law by which we come to the knowledge of sin, is the moral law chiefly and primarily. If this argument of the apostle be good, "that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, because it is by the law that we come to the knowledge of sin;" then it proves that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the moral law, nor by the pre-

cepts of Christianity; for by them is the knowledge of sin. If the reason be good, then where the reason holds, the truth holds. It is a miserable shift, and a violent force put upon the words, to say that the meaning is, that by the law of circumcision is the knowledge of sin, because circumcision signifying the taking away of sin, puts men in mind of sin. The plain meaning of the apostle is, that as the law most strictly forbids sin, it tends to convince us of sin, and bring our own consciences to condemn us, instead of justifying of us; that the use of it is to declare to us our own guilt and unworthiness, which is the reverse of justifying and approving of us as virtuous or worthy. This is the apostle's meaning, if we will allow him to be his own expositor; for he himself, in this very epistle, explains to us how it is that by the law we have the knowledge of sin, and that it is by the law's forbidding sin, chap. vii. 7. "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." There the apostle determines two things; first, That the way in which "by the law is the knowledge of sin," is by the law's forbidding sin: And secondly, which is more directly still to the purpose, he determines that it is the moral law by which we come to the knowledge of sin; "for," says he, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." Now it is the moral, and not the ceremonial law, that says, "thou shalt not covet." Therefore, when the apostle argues, that by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified, because by the law is the knowledge of sin, his argument proves, (unless he was mistaken as to the force of his argument), that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the moral law.

5. It is evident that the apostle does not mean only the ceremonial law, because he gives this reason why we have righteousness, and a title to the privilege of God's children, not by the law, but by faith, "that the law worketh wrath." Rom. iv. 13—16. "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Now the way in which the law works wrath, by the apostle's own account, in the reason he himself annexes, is by forbidding sin, and aggravating the guilt of the transgression; "for," says he, "where no law is, there is no transgression;" And so, chap. vii. 13. "That sin by the com-

mandment might become exceeding sinful." If, therefore, this reason of the apostle be good, it is much stronger against justification by the moral law than the ceremonial law; for it is by transgressions of the moral law chiefly that there comes wrath; for they are most strictly forbidden, and most terribly threatened.

6. It is evident that when the apostle says, we be not justified by the works of the law, that he excludes all our own virtue, goodness, or excellency, by that reason he gives for it, viz. "That boasting might be excluded" Rom. iii. 26, 27, 28. "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" Eph. ii. 8. 9. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Now what are men wont to boast of, but what they esteem their own goodness or excellency? If we are not justified by works of the ceremonial law, yet how does that exclude boasting, as long as we are justified by our own excellency, or virtue and goodness of our own, or works of righteousness which we have done?

But it is said, that boasting is excluded, as circumcision was excluded, which was what the Jews especially used to glory in, and value themselves upon, above other nations.

To this I answer, that the Jews were not only used to boast of circumcision, but were notorious for boasting of their moral righteousness. The Jews of those days were generally admirers and followers of the Pharisees, who were full of their boasts of their moral righteousness; as we may see by the example of the Pharisee mentioned in the 18th of Luke, which Christ mentions as describing the general temper of that sect: "Lord," says he, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men, an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer." The works that he boasts of were chiefly moral works: He depended on the works of the law for justification; and therefore Christ tells us, that the publican, that renounced all his own righteousness, "went down to his house justified rather than he." And elsewhere, we read of the Pharisees praying in the corners of the streets, and sounding a trumpet before them when they did alms. But those works which they so vainly boasted of were *moral* works. And not only so, but what the apostle in this very epistle condemns the Jews for, is their boasting of the

moral law. Chap. ii. 22, 23. "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?" The law here mentioned that they made their boast of, was that of which adultery, idolatry, and sacrilege, were the breaches, which is the moral law. So that this is the boasting which the apostle condemns them for; and therefore, if they were justified by the works of this law, then how comes he to say that their boasting is excluded? And besides, when they boasted of the rites of the ceremonial law, it was under a notion of its being a part of their own goodness or excellency, or what made them holier and more lovely in the sight of God than other people; and if they were not justified by this part of their own supposed goodness or holiness, yet if they were by another, how did that exclude boasting? How was their boasting excluded, unless all goodness or excellency of their own was excluded?

7. The reason given by the apostle why we can be justified only by faith, and not by the works of the law, in the 3d chapter of Gal. viz. "That they that are under the law, are under the curse," makes it evident that he does not mean only the ceremonial law. In that chapter the apostle had particularly insisted upon it, that Abraham was justified by faith, and that it is by faith only, and not by the works of the law, that we can be justified, and become the children of Abraham, and be made partakers of the blessing of Abraham: And he gives this reason for it, in the 10th verse: "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is manifest that these words, cited from Deuteronomy, are spoken not only with regard to the ceremonial law, but the whole law of God to mankind, and chiefly the moral law; and that all mankind are therefore as they are in themselves under that curse, not only while the ceremonial law lasted, but now since that has ceased. And therefore all who are justified, are redeemed from that curse, by Christ's bearing it for them; as in verse 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now therefore, either its being said, that he is cursed who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, is a good reason why we cannot be justified by the works of that law of which it is so said; or it is

not: if it be, then it is a good reason why we cannot be justified by the works of the moral law, and of the whole rule which God has given to mankind to walk by; for the words are spoken of the moral as well as the ceremonial law, and reach every command or precept which God has given to mankind; and chiefly the moral precepts, which are most strictly enjoined, and the violations of which in both the New Testament and the Old, and in the books of Moses themselves, are threatened with the most dreadful curse.

8. The apostle in like manner argues against our being justified by our own righteousness, as he does against being justified by the works of the law; and evidently uses the expressions, of our *own righteousness*, and *works of the law*, promiscuously, and as signifying the same thing. It is particularly evident by Rom. x. 3. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Here it is plain that the same thing is asserted as in the two last verses but one of the foregoing chapter. "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." And it is very unreasonable, upon several accounts, to suppose that the apostle, by their own righteousness, intends only their ceremonial righteousness. For when the apostle warns us against trusting in our own righteousness for justification, doubtless it is fair to interpret the expression in an agreement with other scriptures, where we are warned, not to think that it is for the sake of our own righteousness that we obtain God's favour and blessing: as particularly in Deut. ix. 4—6. "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which he sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people." None will pretend that here the expression *thy righteousness*, signifies only a ceremonial righteousness, but all

virtue or goodness of their own; yea, and the inward goodness of the heart, as well as the outward goodness of life; which appears by the beginning of the 5th verse, "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart;" and also by the antithesis in the 6th verse, "Not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people." Their stiff-neckedness was their moral wickedness, obstinacy, and perverseness of heart. By righteousness, therefore, on the contrary, is meant their moral virtue, and rectitude of heart and life. This is what I would argue from hence, that the expression of *our own righteousness*, when used in scripture with relation to the favour of God—and when we are warned against looking upon it as that by which that favour, or the fruits of it, are obtained—does not signify only a ceremonial righteousness, but all manner of goodness of our own.

The Jews also, in the New Testament, are condemned for trusting in their own righteousness in this sense; Luke xviii. 9, &c. "And he spake this parable unto certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous." This intends chiefly a moral righteousness; as appears by the parable itself, in which we have an account of the prayer of the Pharisee, wherein the things that he mentions as what he trusts in, are chiefly moral qualifications and performances, viz. That he was not an extortioner, unjust, nor an adulterer, &c.

But we need not go to the writings of other penmen of the scripture. If we will allow the apostle Paul to be his own interpreter, he—when he speaks of our own righteousness as that by which we are not justified or saved—does not mean only a ceremonial righteousness, nor does he only intend a way of religion and serving God, of our own choosing, without divine warrant or prescription; but by our own righteousness he means the same as a righteousness of our own doing, whether it be a service or righteousness of God's prescribing, or our own unwarranted performing. Let it be an obedience to the ceremonial law, or a gospel obedience, or what it will, if it be a righteousness of our own doing, it is excluded by the apostle in this affair, as is evident by Titus iii. 5. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done."——But I would more particularly insist on this text; and therefore this may be the

9th argument, That the apostle, when he denies justification by works, works of the law, and our own righteousness, does not mean works of the ceremonial law only. Tit. iii. 3—7. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient,

deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Works of righteousness that we have done are here excluded, as what we are neither saved nor justified by. The apostle expressly says, we are not saved by them; and it is evident that when he says this, he has respect to the affair of justification. And that he means, we are not *saved* by them in not being *justified* by them, as by the next verse but one, which is part of the same sentence, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

It is several ways manifest, that the apostle in this text, by "works of righteousness which we have done," does not mean only works of the ceremonial law. It appears by the 3d verse, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." These are breaches of the moral law, that the apostle observes they lived in before they were justified: and it is most plain that it is this which gives occasion to the apostle to observe, as he does in the 5th verse, that it was not by works of righteousness which they had done, that they were saved or justified.

But we need not go to the context, it is most apparent from the words themselves, that the apostle does not mean only works of the ceremonial law. If he had only said, it is not by our own works of righteousness; what could we understand by works of righteousness, but only righteous works, or, which is the same thing, good works? And to say, that it is by our own righteous works that we are justified, though not by one particular kind of righteous works, would certainly be a contradiction to such an assertion. But, the words are rendered yet more strong, plain, and determined in their sense, by those additional words, *which we have done;* which shews that the apostle intends to exclude all our own righteous or virtuous works universally. If it should be asserted concerning any commodity, treasure, or precious jewel, that it could not be procured by money, and not only so, but, to make the assertion the more strong, it should be asserted with additional

words, that it could not be procured by money tha' men possess; how unreasonable would it be, after all, to say, that all that was meant was, that it could not be procured with brass money?

And what renders the interpreting of this text, as intending works of the ceremonial law, yet more unreasonable, is, that these works were indeed no works of righteousness at all but were only falsely supposed to be so by the Jews. And this our opponents in this doctrine also suppose is the very reason why we are not justified by them, because they are not works of righteousness, or because (the ceremonial law being now abrogated) there is no obedience in them. But how absurd is it to say, that the apostle, when he says we are not justified by works of righteousness that we have done, meant only works of the ceremonial law, and that for that very reason, because they are not works of righteousness? To illustrate this by the forementioned comparison: If it should be asserted, that such a thing could not be procured by money that men possess, how ridiculous would it be to say, that the meaning only was, that it could not be procured by counterfeit money, and that for that reason, because it was not money. What scripture will stand before men, if they will take liberty to manage scripture thus? Or what one text is there in the Bible that may not at this rate be explained all away, and perverted to any sense men please?

But further, if we should allow that the apostle intends only to oppose justification by works of the ceremonial law in this text, yet it is evident by the expression he uses, that he means to oppose it under that notion, or in that quality, of their being works of righteousness of our own doing. But if the apostle argues against our being justified by works of the ceremonial law, under the notion of their being of that nature and kind, viz. works of our own doing; then it will follow, that the apostle's argument is strong against, not only those, but all of that nature and kind, even all that are of our own doing.

If there were no other text in the Bible about justification but this, this would clearly and invincibly prove, that we are not justified by any of our own goodness, virtue, or righteousness, or for the excellency or righteousness of any thing that we have done in religion; because it is here so fully and strongly asserted; but this text abundantly confirms other texts of the apostle, where he denies justification by works of the law. No doubt can be rationally made, but that the apos-

tle, when he shews, that God does not save us by "works of righteousness that we have done," verse 5. and that so we are "justified by grace," verse 7. herein opposing salvation by works, and salvation by grace—means the *same* works as he does in other places, where he in like manner opposes works and grace: as in Rom. xi. 6. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." And the same works as in Rom. iv. 4. "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." And the same works that are spoken of in the context of the 24th verse of the foregoing chapter, which the apostle there calls "works of the law, being justified freely by his grace." And of the 4th chapter, 16th verse, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Where in the context the righteousness of faith is opposed to the righteousness of the law: For here God's saving us according to his mercy, and justifying us by grace, is opposed to saving us by works of righteousness that we have done; in the same manner as in those places, justifying us by his grace, is opposed to justifying us by works of the law.

10. The apostle could not mean only works of the ceremonial law, when he says, we are not justified by the works of the law, because it is asserted of the saints under the Old Testament as well as New. If men are justified by their sincere obedience, it will then follow that formerly, before the ceremonial law was abrogated, men were justified by the works of the ceremonial law, as well as the moral. For if we are justified by our sincere obedience, then it alters not the case, whether the commands be moral or positive, provided they be God's commands, and our obedience be obedience to God. And so the case must be just the same under the Old Testament, with the works of the moral law and ceremonial, according to the measure of the virtue of obedience there was in either. It is true, their obedience to the ceremonial law would have nothing to do in the affair of justification, unless it was sincere; and so neither would the works of the moral law. If obedience was the thing, then obedience to the ceremonial law, while that stood in force, and obedience to the moral law, had just the same sort of concern, according to the proportion of obedience that consists in each; as now under the New Testament, if obedience is what we are justified by, that obedience must doubtless comprehend obedience to all God's commands now in force, to the positive precepts of attendance

on baptism and the Lord's supper, as well as moral precepts. If obedience be the thing, it is not because it is obedience to such a kind of commands, but because it is *obedience*. So that by this supposition, the saints under the Old Testament were justified, at least in part, by their obedience to the ceremonial law.

But it is evident that the saints under the Old Testament were not justified, in any measure, by the works of the ceremonial law. This may be proved, proceeding on the foot of our adversaries' own interpretation of the apostle's phrase, "the works of the law," and supposing him to mean by it only the works of the ceremonial law. To instance in David, it is evident that he was not justified in any wise by the works of the ceremonial law, by Rom. iv. 6—8. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." It is plain that the apostle is here speaking of justification, from the preceding verse, and all the context; and the thing spoken of, viz. forgiving iniquities and covering sins, is what our adversaries themselves suppose to be justification, and even the whole of justification. This David, speaking of himself, says (by the apostle's interpretation) that he had *without* works. For it is manifest that David, in the words here cited, from the beginning of the 32d psalm, has a special respect to himself: he speaks of his own sins being forgiven and not imputed to him; as appears by the words that immediately follow. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Let us therefore understand the apostle which way we will respecting works, when he says, "David describes the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works," whether of all manner of works, or only works of the ceremonial law, yet it is evident at least, that David was not justified by works of the ceremonial law. Therefore here is the argument: If our own obedience be that by which men are justified, then under the Old Testament, men were justified partly by obedience to the ceremonial law, (as has been proved); but the saints under the Old Testament were not justified partly by the works of the ceremonial

law; therefore men's own obedience is not that by which they are justified.

11. Another argument that the apostle, when he speaks of the two opposite ways of justification, one by the works of the law, and the other by faith, does not mean only the works of the ceremonial law, may be taken from Rom. x. 5, 6. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things, shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise," &c.—Here two things are evident.

First, That the apostle here speaks of the same two opposite ways of justification, one by the righteousness which is of the law, the other by faith, that he had treated of in the former part of the epistle; and therefore it must be the same law that is here spoken of. The same law is here meant as in the last verses of the foregoing chapter, where he says, the Jews had "not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law;" as is plain, because the apostle is still speaking of the same thing; the words are a continuation of the same discourse, as may be seen at first glance, by any one that looks on the context.

Secondly, It is manifest that Moses, when he describes the righteousness which is of the law, or the way of justification by the law, in the words here cited, "He that doth those things, shall live in them," does not speak only, nor chiefly, of the works of the ceremonial law; for none will pretend that God ever made such a covenant with man, that he who kept the ceremonial law should live in it, or that there ever was a time, that it was chiefly by the works of the ceremonial law that men lived and were justified. Yea, it is manifest by the forementioned instance of David, mentioned in the 4th of Romans, that there never was a time wherein men were justified in any measure by the works of the ceremonial law, as has been just now shewn. Moses therefore, in those words which, the apostle says, are a description of the righteousness which is of the law, cannot mean only the ceremonial law. And therefore it follows, that when the apostle speaks of justification by the works of the law, as opposite to justification by faith, he does not mean only the ceremonial law, but also the works of the moral law, which are the things spoken of by Moses, when he says, "he that doth those things, shall live in them." And these are the things which the apostle in this very place is arguing that we cannot be justified by; as is evident by the last verses of the preceding

chapter; "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law," &c. And in the 3d verse of this chapter, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

And further, how can the apostle's description that he here gives from Moses, of this exploded way of justification by the works of the law, consist with the Arminian scheme, of a way of justification by the virtue of a sincere obedience, that still remains as the true and only way of justification under the gospel? It is most apparent that it is the design of the apostle to give a description of both the legal rejected and the evangelical valid ways of justification, in that wherein they are distinguished the one from the other. But how is it, that "he who doth those things, shall live in them," *that* wherein the way of justification by the works of the law is distinguished from that in which christians under the gospel are justified, according to their scheme; for still, according to them, it may be said, in the same manner, of the precepts of the gospel, he that doth these things, shall live in them. The difference lies only in the things to be done, but not at all in that the doing of them is not the condition of living in them, just in the one case, as in the other. The words, "He that doth them, shall live in them," will serve just as well for a description of the latter as the former. By the apostle's saying, the righteousness of the law is described thus, he that doth these things, shall live in them; but the righteousness of faith saith thus, plainly intimates that the righteousness of faith saith otherwise, and in an opposite manner. Besides, if these words cited from Moses are actually said by him of the moral law as well as ceremonial, as it is most evident they are, it renders it still more absurd to suppose them mentioned by the apostle, as the very note of distinction between justification by a ceremonial obedience, and a moral sincere obedience, as the Arminians must suppose.

Thus I have spoken to a second argument, to prove that we are not justified by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own, viz. that to suppose otherwise, is contrary to the doctrine directly urged, and abundantly insisted on, by the apostle Paul in his epistles.

I now proceed to a

Third argument, viz. That to suppose that we are justified

by our own sincere obedience, or any of our own virtue or goodness, derogates from gospel grace.

That scheme of justification that manifestly takes from, or diminishes the grace of God, is undoubtedly to be rejected; for it is the declared design of God in the gospel to exalt the freedom and riches of his grace, in that method of justification of sinners, and way of admitting them to his favour, and the blessed fruits of it, which it declares. The scripture teaches, that the way of justification appointed in the gospel-covenant, is appointed for that end, that free grace might be expressed, and glorified; Rom. iv. 16. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." The exercising and magnifying of free grace in the gospel-contrivance for the justification and salvation of sinners, is evidently the chief design of it. And this freedom and riches of grace in the gospel is every where spoken of in scripture as the chief glory of it. Therefore that doctrine which derogates from the free grace of God in justifying sinners, as it is most opposite to God's design, so it must be exceedingly offensive to him.

Those who maintain, that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, pretend that their scheme does not diminish the grace of the gospel; for they say, that the grace of God is wonderfully manifested in appointing such a way and method of salvation by sincere obedience, in assisting us to perform such an obedience, and in accepting our imperfect obedience, instead of perfect.

Let us therefore examine that matter, whether their scheme, of a man's being justified by his own virtue and sincere obedience, does derogate from the grace of God or no; or whether free grace is not more exalted in supposing, as we do, that we are justified without any manner of goodness of our own. In order to this, I will lay down this self-evident

Proposition, that whatsoever that be by which the abundant benevolence of the giver is expressed, and gratitude in the receiver is obliged, that magnifies free grace. This I suppose none will ever controvert or dispute.—And it is not much less evident, that it doth both shew a more abundant benevolence in the giver when he shews kindness without goodness or excellency in the object, to move him to it; and that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver.

1. It shews a more abundant goodness in the giver, when he shews kindness without any excellency in our persons or actions that should move the giver to love and beneficence.

For it certainly shews the more abundant and overflowing goodness, or disposition to communicate good, by how much the less loveliness or excellency there is to entice beneficence. The less there is in the receiver to draw good-will and kindness, it argues the more of the principle of good-will and kindness in the giver. One that has but a little of a principle of love and benevolence, may be drawn to do good, and to shew kindness, when there is a great deal to draw him, or when there is much excellency and loveliness in the object to move good-will; when he whose goodness and benevolence is more abundant, will shew kindness where there is less to draw it forth; for he does not so much need to have it drawn from without, he has enough of the principle within to move him of itself. Where there is most of the principle, there it is most sufficient for itself, and stands in least need of something without to excite it. For certainly a more abundant goodness more easily flows forth with less to impel or draw it, than where there is less; or, which is the same thing, the more any one is disposed of himself, the less he needs from without himself, to put him upon it, or stir him up to it. And therefore his kindness and goodness appears the more exceeding great, when it is bestowed without any excellency or loveliness at all in the receiver, or when the receiver is respected in the gift, as wholly without excellency. And much more still when the benevolence of the giver not only finds nothing in the receiver to draw it, but a great deal of hatefulness to repel it. The abundance of goodness is then manifested, not only in flowing forth without any thing extrinsic to put it forward, but in overcoming great repulsion in the object. And then does kindness and love appear most triumphant, and wonderfully great, when the receiver is not only wholly without all excellency or beauty to attract it, but altogether, yea infinitely vile and hateful.

2. It is apparent also that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver. This is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, that the less worthy or excellent the object of benevolence, or the receiver of kindness, is, the more he is obliged, and the greater gratitude is due. He therefore is most of all obliged, that receives kindness without any goodness or excellency in himself, but with a total and universal hatefulness. And as it is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, so it is agreeable to the word of God. How often does God in the Scripture insist on this argument with men, to move them to love him, and to acknowledge his kindness? How much does he insist on this as an obligation to gratitude, that they are so sinful, and undeserving, and ill deserving?

Therefore it certainly follows, that the doctrine which teaches, that God, when he justifies a man, and shews him such great kindness as to give him a right to eternal life, does not do it for any obedience, or any manner of goodness of his; but that justification respects a man as ungodly, and wholly without any manner of virtue, beauty, or excellency. I say, this doctrine does certainly more exalt the free grace of God in justification, and man's obligation to gratitude for such a favour, than the contrary doctrine, viz. That God, in shewing this kindness to man, respects him as sincerely obedient and virtuous, and as having something in him that is truly excellent and lovely, and acceptable in his sight, and that this goodness or excellency of man is the very fundamental condition of the bestowment of that kindness on him, or of distinguishing him from others by that benefit. But I hasten to a

Fourth argument for the truth of the doctrine, That to suppose a man is justified by his own virtue or obedience, derogates from the honour of the Mediator, and ascribes that to man's virtue which belongs only to the righteousness of Christ: It puts man in Christ's stead, and makes him his own Saviour, in a respect in which Christ only is his Saviour. And so it is a doctrine contrary to the nature and design of the gospel, which is to abase man, and to ascribe all the glory of our salvation to Christ the Redeemer. It is inconsistent with the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is a gospel-doctrine.

Here I would, *explain* what we mean by the *imputation* of Christ's righteousness. *Prove* the thing intended by it to be true. *Shew* that this doctrine is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by our own virtue or sincere obedience.

First, I would explain what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Sometimes the expression is taken by our divines in a larger sense, for the imputation of all that Christ did and suffered for our redemption, whereby we are free from guilt, and stand righteous in the sight of God; and so implies the imputation both of Christ's satisfaction and obedience. But here I intend it in a stricter sense, for the imputation of that righteousness or moral goodness that consists in the obedience of Christ. And by that righteousness being *imputed* to us, is meant no other than this, that the righteousness of Christ is accepted for us, and admitted instead of that perfect inherent righteousness which ought to be in ourselves. Christ's perfect obedience shall be reckoned to our account, so that we shall have the benefit of it, as though we had performed it ourselves. And so we suppose that a title to eternal life is

given us as the reward of this righteousness. The Scripture uses the word *impute* in this sense, viz. for reckoning any thing belonging to any person, to another person's account: As Philemon 18. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." In the original it is τουτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλογα: *impute that to me.* It is a word of the same root with that which is translated *impute*, Rom. iv. 6. "To whom God imputeth righteousness without works." And it is the very same word that is used, Rom. v. 13. that is translated *impute*, "sin is not imputed when there is no law."

The opposers of this doctrine suppose that there is an absurdity in supposing that God imputes Christ's obedience to us, it is to suppose that God is mistaken, and thinks that we performed that obedience which Christ performed. But why cannot that righteousness be reckoned to our account, and be accepted for us, without any such absurdity? Why is there any more absurdity in it, than in a merchant's transferring debt or credit from one man's account to another, when one man pays a price for another, so that it shall be accepted as if that other had paid it? Why is there any more absurdity in supposing that Christ's obedience is imputed to us, than that his satisfaction is imputed? If Christ has suffered the penalty of the law in our stead, then it will follow, that his suffering that penalty is imputed to us, that is accepted for us, and in our stead, and is reckoned to our account, as though we had suffered it. But why may not his obeying the law of God be as rationally reckoned to our account, as his suffering the penalty of the law? Why may not a price to bring into debt, be as rationally transferred from one person's account to another, as a price to pay a debt? Having thus explained what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, I proceed,

Secondly, To prove that the righteousness of Christ is thus imputed.

1. There is the very same need of Christ's obeying the law in our stead, in order to the reward, as of his suffering the penalty of the law in our stead, in order to our escaping the penalty; and the same reason why one should be accepted on our account, as the other. There is the same need of one as the other, that the law of God might be answered: One was as requisite to answer the law as the other. It is certain, that was the reason why there was need that Christ should suffer the penalty for us, even that the law might be answered; for this the scripture plainly teaches. This is given as the reason why Christ was made a curse for us, that the law threatened

a curse to us, Gal. iii. 10, 13. But the same law that fixes the curse of God as the consequence of not continuing in all things written in the law to do them, verse 10. has as much fixed doing those things as an antecedent of living in them, (as verse 12.) There is as much connection established in one case as in the other. There is therefore exactly the same need, from the law, of perfect obedience being fulfilled in order to our obtaining the reward, as there is of death being suffered in order to our escaping the punishment; or the same necessity by the law, of perfect obedience preceding life, as there is of disobedience being succeeded by death. The law is, without doubt, as much of an established rule in one case as in the other.

Christ by suffering the penalty, and so making atonement for us, only removes the guilt of our sins, and so sets us in the same state that Adam was in the first moment of his creation: And it is no more fit that we should obtain eternal life only on that account, than that Adam should have the reward of eternal life, or of a confirmed and unalterable state of happiness, the first moments of his existence, without any obedience at all. Adam was not to have the reward merely on account of his being innocent; if so, he would have had it fixed upon him at once, as soon as ever he was created; for he was as innocent then as he could be. But he was to have the reward on account of his activeness in obedience; not on account merely of his not having done ill, but on account of his doing well.

So on the same account we have not eternal life merely as void of guilt, which we have by the atonement of Christ; but on the account of Christ's activeness in obedience, and doing well. Christ is our second fœderal head, and is called the second Adam, 1 Cor. xv. 22. because he acted that part for us which the first Adam should have done. When he had undertaken to stand in our stead, he was looked upon and treated as though he were guilty with our guilt; and by his bearing the penalty, he did as it were free himself from this guilt. But by this the second Adam did only bring himself into the state in which the first Adam was on the first moment of his existence, viz. a state of mere freedom from guilt; and hereby indeed was free from any obligation to suffer punishment: But this being supposed, there was need of something further, even a positive obedience, in order to his obtaining, as our second Adam, the reward of eternal life.

God saw meet to place man first in a state of trial, and not to give him a title to eternal life as soon as he had made him; because it was his will that he should first give honour to his

authority, by fully submitting to it, in will and act, and perfectly obeying his law. God insisted upon it, that his holy majesty and law should have their due acknowledgment and honour from man, such as became the relation he stood in to that Being who created him, before he would bestow the reward of confirmed and everlasting happiness upon him; and therefore God gave him a law that he might have opportunity, by giving due honour to his authority in obeying it, to obtain this happiness. It therefore became Christ—seeing that, in assuming man to himself, he sought a title to this eternal happiness for him after he had broken the law—that he himself should become subject to God's authority, and be in the form of a servant, that he might do that honour to God's authority for him, by his obedience, which God at first required of man as the condition of his having a title to that reward. Christ came into the world to render the honour of God's authority and law consistent with the salvation and eternal life of sinners; he came to save them, and yet withal to assert and vindicate the honour of the lawgiver, and his holy law. Now, if the sinner, after his sin was satisfied for, had eternal life bestowed upon him without active righteousness, the honour of his law would not be sufficiently vindicated. Supposing this were possible, that the sinner himself could, by suffering, pay the debt, and afterwards be in the same state that he was in before his probation, that is to say, negatively righteous, or merely without guilt; if he now at last should have eternal life bestowed upon him, without performing that condition of obedience; then God would recede from his law, and would give the promised reward, and his law never have respect and honour shewn to it, in that way of being obeyed. But now Christ, by subjecting himself to the law, and obeying of it, has done great honour to the law, and to the authority of God who gave it. That so glorious a person should become subject to the law, and fulfil it, has done much more to honour it, than if mere man had obeyed it. It was a thing infinitely honourable to God, that a person of infinite dignity was not ashamed to call him his God, and to adore and obey him as such. This was more to God's honour than if any mere creature, of any possible degree of excellence and dignity, had so done.

It is absolutely necessary, that in order to a sinner's being justified, the righteousness of some other should be reckoned to his account; for it is declared, that the person justified is looked upon as (in himself) ungodly; but God neither will nor can justify a person without a righteousness; for justification is

manifestly a *forensic* term, as the word is used in scripture, and a judicial thing, or the act of a judge. So that if a person should be justified without a righteousness, the judgment would not be according to truth. The sentence of justification would be a false sentence, unless there be a righteousness performed that is by the judge properly looked upon as his. To say, that God does not justify the sinner without sincere, though an imperfect obedience, does not help the case; for an imperfect righteousness before a judge is no righteousness. To accept of something that falls short of the rule, instead of something else that answers the rule, is no judicial act, or act of a judge, but a pure act of sovereignty. An imperfect righteousness is no righteousness before a judge; For "righteousness (as one observes) is a relative thing, and has always relation to a law. The formal nature of righteousness, properly understood, lies in a conformity of actions to that which is the rule and measure of them." Therefore that only is righteousness in the sight of a judge that answers the law *. The law is the judge's rule:

* That perfect obedience, is what is called righteousness in the New Testament, and that this righteousness, or perfect obedience, is by God's fixed unalterable rule the condition of justification, is, from the plain evidence of truth, confessed by a certain great man, whom nobody will think to be blinded by prejudice in favour of the doctrine we are maintaining, and one who did not receive this doctrine. M. Locke, in his *Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures*, vol. 2. of his works, p. 474. writes thus: "To one that thus unbiassed reads the Scripture, what *Adam* fell from, is visible, was the state of perfect obedience, which is called *justice* in the New Testament, though the word, which in the original signifies justice, be translated *righteousness.*" Ibid. p. 476, 477. "For righteousness or an exact obedience to the law, seems by the Scripture to have a claim of right to eternal life; Rom. iv. 4. *To him that worketh, i. e.* does the works of the law, *is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt.*—On the other side, it seems the unalterable purpose of divine justice, that no unrighteous person, no one that is guilty of any breach of the law, should be in Paradise; but that the wages of sin should be to every man, as it was to Adam, an exclusion of him out of that happy state of immortality, and bring death upon him. And this is so conformable to the eternal and established law of right and wrong, that it is spoke of too as it could not be otherwise.—Here then we have the standing and fixed measures of life and death; immortality and bliss belong to the righteous. Those who have lived in an exact conformity to the law of God are out of the reach of death; but an exclusion from Paradise and loss of immortality, is the portion of sinners, of all those who have any way broke that law, and failed of a complete obedience to it, by the guilt of any one transgression. And thus mankind, by the law, are put upon the issues of life or death, as they are righteous or unrighteous, just or unjust, i. e. exact performers, or transgressors of the law." Again, in p. 477. "The law of works then in short is, that law which requires perfect obedience, without any remission or abatement; so that by that law a man cannot be just or justified, without an exact performance of every tittle. Such a perfect obedience in the New Testament, is termed δικαιοσυνη, which we translate *righteousness.*" In which last passage it is also to be noted, that Mr. Locke, by the law of works, does not understand the ceremonial law, but the covenant of works: as he more fully expresses himself in the next paragraph but one. "Where this law of works was to be found, the New Testament tells us, viz. in the law delivered by Moses; John, i. 17. *The law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* Chap. vii. 19. *Did not Moses give you the law*, says our Saviour, *and yet none of you keep the law?* And this is the law which he speaks of—verse 28. *This do, and thou shalt live.* This is that which St. Paul so often styles *the law*, with-

If he pardons and hides what really is, and so does not pass sentence according to what things are in themselves, he either does not act the part of a judge, or else judges falsely. The very notion of judging is to determine what is, and what is not, in any one's case. The judge's work is twofold; it is to determine first what is fact, and then whether what is in fact be according to rule, or according to the law. If a judge has no rule or law established beforehand, by which he should proceed in judging, he has no foundation to go upon in judging, he has no opportunity to be a judge; nor is it possible that he should do the part of a judge. To judge without a law, or rule by which to judge, is impossible; for the very notion of judging, is to determine whether the object of judgment be according to rule; and therefore God has declared, that when he acts as a judge, he will not justify the wicked, and cannot clear the guilty; and, by parity of reason, cannot justify without righteousness.

And the scheme of the old law's being abrogated, and a new law introduced, will not help at all in this difficulty; for an imperfect righteousness cannot answer the law of God we are under, whether that be an old or a new one; for every law requires perfect obedience to itself. Every rule whatsoever requires perfect conformity to itself; it is a contradiction to suppose otherwise. For to say, that there is a law that does not require perfect obedience to itself, is to say that there is a law that does not require all that it requires. That law that now forbids sin, is certainly the law that we are now under, (let that be an old or a new one); or else it is not sin. That which is not forbidden, and is the breach of no law, is no sin. But if we are now forbidden to commit sin, then it is by a law that we are now under; for surely we are neither under the forbiddings nor commanding of a law that we are not under. Therefore, if all sin is now forbidden, then we are now under a law that requires perfect obedience; and therefore nothing can be accepted as a righteousness in the sight of our Judge, but perfect righteousness. So that our Judge cannot justify us, unless he sees a perfect righteousness, some way belonging to us, either performed by ourselves, or by another, and justly and duly reckoned to our account.

God doth, in the sentence of justification, pronounce a man perfectly righteous, or else he would need a further justifi-

out any other distinction; Rom. ii. 13. *Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law are justified.* It is needless to quote any more places, his epistles are all full of it, especially this to the Romans."

cation after he is justified. His sins being removed by Christ's atonement, is not sufficient for his justification; for justifying a man, as has been already shewn, is not merely pronouncing him innocent, or without guilt, but standing right with regard to the rule that he is under, and righteous unto life: But this, according to the established rule of nature, reason, and divine appointment, is a positive, perfect righteousness.

As there is the same need that Christ's obedience should be reckoned to our account, as that his atonement should; so there is the same reason why it should. As if Adam had persevered, and finished his course of obedience, we should have received the benefit of his obedience, as much as now we have the mischief of his disobedience; so in like manner, there is reason that we should receive the benefit of the second Adam's obedience, as of his atonement of our disobedience. Believers are represented in Scripture as being so in Christ, as that they are legally one, or accepted as one, by the supreme Judge: Christ has assumed our nature, and has so assumed all, in that nature that belongs to him, into such an union with himself, that he is become their Head, and has taken them to be his members. And therefore, what Christ has done in our nature, whereby he did honour to the law and authority of God by his acts, as well as the reparation to the honour of the law by his sufferings, is reckoned to the believer's account; so as that the believer should be made happy, because it was so well and worthily done by his Head, as well as freed from being miserable, because he has suffered for our ill and unworthy doing.

When Christ had once undertaken with God to stand for us, and put himself under our law, by that law he was obliged to suffer, and by the same law he was obliged to obey: By the same law, after he had taken man's guilt upon him, he himself being our surety, could not be acquitted till he had suffered, nor rewarded till he had obeyed: But he was not acquitted as a private person, but as our head, and believers are acquitted in his acquittance; nor was he accepted to a reward for his obedience, as a private person, but as our head, and we are accepted to a reward in his acceptance. The Scripture teaches us, that when Christ was raised from the dead, he was justified; which justification, as I have already shewn, implies both his acquittance from our guilt, and his acceptance to the exaltation and glory that was the reward of his obedience: But believers, as soon as they believe, are admitted to partake with Christ in this his justification: Hence we are told, that

he was "raised again for our justification," Rom. iv. 25. which is true, not only of that part of his justification that consists in his acquittance, but also his acceptance to his reward. The Scripture teaches us, that he is exalted, and gone to heaven to take possession of glory in our name, as our forerunner, Heb. vi. 20. We are as it were, both raised up together with Christ, and also made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places, and in him, Eph. ii. 6.

If it be objected here, that there is this reason, why what Christ suffered should be accepted on our account, rather than the obedience he performed, that he was obliged to obedience for himself, but was not obliged to suffer but only on our account; to this I answer, That Christ was not obliged, on his own account, to undertake to obey. Christ, in his original circumstances, was in no subjection to the Father, being altogether equal with him: He was under no obligation to put himself in man's stead, and under man's law; or to put himself into any state of subjection to God whatsoever. There was a transaction between the Father and the Son, that was antecedent to Christ's becoming man, and being made under the law, wherein he undertook to put himself under the law, and both to obey and to suffer; in which transaction these things were already virtually done in the sight of God; as is evident by this, that God acted on the ground of that transaction, justifying and saving sinners, as if the things undertaken had been actually performed long before they were performed indeed. And therefore, without doubt, in order to estimate the value and validity of what Christ did and suffered, we must look back to that transaction, wherein these things were first undertaken, and virtually done in the sight of God, and see what capacity and circumstances Christ acted in them, and we shall find that Christ was under no manner of obligation, either to obey the law, or to suffer its penalty. After this he was equally under obligation to both; for henceforward he stood as our surety or representative: And therefore this consequent obligation may be as much of an objection against the validity of his suffering the penalty, as against his obedience. But if we look to that original transaction between the Father and the Son, wherein both these were undertaken and accepted as virtually done in the sight of the Father, we shall find Christ acting with regard to both, as one perfectly in his own right, and under no manner of previous obligation to hinder the validity of either.

2. To suppose that all Christ does is only to make atonement for us by suffering, is to make him our Saviour but in

part. It is to rob him of half his glory as a Saviour. For if so, all that he does is to deliver us from hell; he does not purchase heaven for us. The adverse scheme supposes that he purchases heaven for us, in that he satisfies for the imperfections of our obedience, and so purchases that our sincere imperfect obedience might be accepted as the condition of eternal life; and so purchases an opportunity for us to obtain heaven by our own obedience. But to purchase heaven for us only in this sense, is to purchase it in no sense at all; for all of it comes to no more than a satisfaction for our sins, or removing the penalty by suffering in our stead. For all the purchasing they speak of, that our imperfect obedience should be accepted, is only his satisfying for the sinful imperfection of our obedience; or (which is the same thing) making atonement for the sin that our obedience is attended with. But that is not purchasing heaven, merely to set us at liberty again, that we may go and get heaven by what we do ourselves: all that Christ does is only to pay a debt for us; there is no positive purchase of any good. We are taught in scripture that heaven is purchased for us; it is called the *purchased possession*, Eph. i. 14. The gospel proposes the eternal inheritance, not to be acquired, as the first covenant did, but as already acquired and purchased. But he that pays a man's debt for him, and so delivers him from slavery, cannot be said to purchase an estate for him, merely because he sets him at liberty, so that henceforward he has an opportunity to get an estate by his own hand-labour. So that according to this scheme, the saints in heaven have no reason to thank Christ for purchasing heaven for them, or redeeming them to God, and making them kings and priests, as we have an account that they do in Rev. v. 9.

3. Justification by the righteousness and obedience of Christ, is a doctrine that the scripture teaches in very full terms; Rom. v. 18, 19. "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." Here in one verse we are told, that we have justification by Christ's righteousness; and, that there might be no room to understand the righteousness spoken of, merely of Christ's atonement by his suffering the penalty, in the next verse it is put in other terms, and asserted, that it is by Christ's obedience we are made righteous. It is scarcely possible any thing should be more full and determined: The terms, taken singly, are such as fix their own meaning, and taken together, they fix the meaning of

each other. The words shew that we are justified by that righteousness of Christ which consists in his obedience, and that we are made righteous or justified by that obedience of his, that is, his righteousness, or moral goodness before God.

Here possibly it may be objected, that this text means only, that we are justified by Christ's passive obedience.

To this I answer, whether we call it active or passive, it alters not the case as to the present argument, as long as it is evident by the words, that it is not merely under the notion of an atonement for disobedience, or a satisfaction for unrighteousness, but under the notion of a positive obedience, and a righteousness, or moral goodness, that it justifies us, or makes us righteous; because both the words *righteousness* and *obedience* are used, and used too as the opposites to sin and disobedience, and an offence. "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." Now, what can be meant by righteousness, when spoken of as the opposite to sin, or moral evil, but moral goodness? What is the righteousness that is the opposite of an offence, but the behaviour that is well pleasing? and what can be meant by obedience, when spoken of as the opposite of disobedience, or going contrary to a command, but a positive obeying and an actual complying with the command? So that there is no room for any invented distinction of active and passive, to hurt the argument from this scripture; for it is evident by it, as any thing can be, that believers are justified by the righteousness and obedience of Christ, under the notion of his moral goodness;—his positive obeying, and actual complying with the commands of God, and that behaviour which because of its conformity to his commands, was well-pleasing in his sight. This is all that ever any need to desire to have granted in this dispute.

By this it appears, that if Christ's dying be here included in the words *righteousness* and *obedience*, it is not merely as a propitiation, or bearing a penalty of a broken law in our stead, but as his voluntary submitting and yielding himself to those sufferings, was an act of obedience to the Father's commands, and so was a part of his positive righteousness, or moral goodness.

Indeed all obedience considered under the notion of

righteousness, is something active, something done in voluntary compliance with a command; whether it may be done without suffering, or whether it be hard and difficult; yet as it is obedience, righteousness, or moral goodness, it must be considered as something voluntary and active. If any one is commanded to go through difficulties and sufferings, and he, in compliance with this command, voluntarily does it, he properly obeys in so doing; and as he voluntarily does it in compliance with a command, his obedience is as active as any whatsoever. It is the same sort of obedience, a thing of the very same nature, as when a man, in compliance with a command, does a piece of hard service, or goes through hard labour; and there is no room to distinguish between such obedience of it, as if it were a thing of quite a different nature, by such opposite terms as active and passive: all the distinction that can be pretended, is that which is between obeying an easy command and a difficult one. But is there from hence any foundation to make two species of obedience, one active and the other passive? There is no appearance of any such distinction ever entering into the hearts of any of the penmen of scripture.

It is true, that of late, when a man refuses to obey the precept of a human law, but patiently yields himself up to suffer the penalty of the law, it is called *passive* obedience: but this I suppose is only a modern use of the word *obedience*; surely it is a sense of the word that the scripture is a perfect stranger to. It is improperly called obedience, unless there be such a precept in the law, that he shall yield himself patiently to suffer, to which his so doing shall be an active voluntary conformity. There may in some sense be said to be a conformity to the law in a person's suffering the penalty of the law; but no other conformity to the law is properly called obedience to it, but an active voluntary conformity to the precepts of it. The word *obey* is often found in scripture with respect to the law of God to man, but never in any other sense.

It is true that Christ's *willingly* undergoing those sufferings which he endured, is a great part of that obedience or righteousness by which we are justified. The sufferings of Christ are respected in scripture under a two-fold consideration, either merely as his being substituted for us, or put into our stead, in suffering the penalty of the law; and so his sufferings are considered as a satisfaction and propitiation for sin; or as he, in obedience to a law or command of the Father, voluntarily submitted himself to those sufferings, and actively yielded him-

self up to bear them; and so they are considered as his righteousness, and a part of his active obedience. Christ underwent death in obedience to the command of the Father, Psalm, xl. 6, 7, 8. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy "law is within my heart." John, x. 17, 18. "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John xviii. 11. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And this is part, and indeed the principal part of that active obedience by which we are justified.

It can be no just objection against this, that the command of the Father to Christ, that he should lay down his life, was no part of the law that we had broken; and therefore, that his obeying this command could be no part of that obedience that he performed for us, because we needed that he should obey no other law for us, but only that which we had broken or failed of obeying. For although it must be the same legislative authority, whose honour is repaired by Christ's obedience, that we have injured by our disobedience; yet there is no need that the law which Christ obeys should be precisely the same that Adam was to have obeyed, in that sense, that there should be no positive precepts wanting, nor any added. There was wanting the precept about the forbidden fruit, and there was added the ceremonial law. The thing required was perfect obedience. It is no matter whether the positive precepts were the same, if they were equivalent. The positive precepts that Christ was to obey, were much more than equivalent to what was wanting, because infinitely more difficult, particularly the command that he had received to lay down his life, which was his principal act of obedience, and which, above all others, is concerned in our justification. As that act of disobedience by which we fell, was disobedience to a positive precept that Christ never was under, viz. that of abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil; so that act of obedience by which principally we are redeemed, is obedience to a positive precept that Adam never was under, viz. the precept of laying down his life. It was suitable that it should be a positive precept, that should try both Adam's and Christ's obedience. Such precepts are the greatest and most proper trial of obedience;

because in them, the mere authority and will of the legislator is the sole ground of the obligation, (and nothing in the nature of the things themselves); and therefore they are the greatest trial of any person's respect to that authority and will.

The law that Christ was subject to, and obeyed, was in some sense the same that was given to Adam. There are innumerable particular duties required by the law only conditionally; and in such circumstances, are comprehended in some great and general rule of that law. Thus, for instance, there are innumerable acts of respect and obedience to men, which are required by the law of nature, (which was a law given to Adam), which yet be not required absolutely, but upon many pre-requisite conditions; as, that there be men standing in such relations to us, and that they give forth such commands, and the like. So many acts of respect and obedience to God are included, in like manner, in the moral law conditionally, or such and such things being supposed; as Abraham's going about to sacrifice his son, the Jews circumcising their children when eight days old, and Adam's not eating the forbidden fruit; they are virtually comprehended in that great general rule of the moral law, that we should obey God, and be subject to him in whatsoever he pleases to command us. Certainly the moral law does as much require us to obey God's positive commands, as it requires us to obey the positive commands of our parents. And thus all that Adam, and all that Christ was commanded, even his observing the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish worship, and his laying down his life, was virtually included in this same great law*.

It is no objection against the last-mentioned thing, even Christ's laying down his life, it being included in the moral law given to Adam, because that law itself allowed of no occasion for any such thing; for the moral law virtually includes all right acts, on all possible occasions, even occasions that the law itself allows not: thus we are obliged by the moral law to

* Thus Mr. Locke in his *Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the scriptures*, vol. 2d of his work, p. 478. "Nay, *whatever God requires any where to be done*, without making any allowance for faith, that is a part of the law of works. So that forbidding Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge, was part of the law of works. Only we must take notice here, that some of God's positive commands being for peculiar ends, and suited to particular circumstances of times, places, and persons, have a limited, and only temporary obligation, by virtue of God's positive injunction: Such as was that part of Moses's law which concerned the outward worship or political constitution of the Jews, and is called the ceremonial and judaical law." Again, p. 479. "Thus then, as to the law in short, the civil and ritual part of the law delivered by Moses obliges not Christians, though to the Jews it were a part of the law of works; it being a part of the law of nature, that men ought to obey every positive law of God, whenever he shall please to make any such addition to the law of his nature."

mortify our lusts, and repent of our sins, though that law allows of no lust to mortify, or sin to repent of.

There is indeed but one great law of God, and that is the same law that says, "if thou sinnest, thou shalt die;" and "cursed is every one that continues not in all things contained in this law to do them." All duties of positive institution are virtually comprehended in this law: and therefore, if the Jews broke the ceremonial law, it exposed them to the penalty of the law, or covenant of works, which threatened, "thou shalt surely die." The law is the eternal and unalterable rule of righteousness between God and man, and therefore is the rule of judgment, by which all that a man does shall be either justified or condemned; and no sin exposes to damnation, but by the law. So now he that refuses to obey the precepts that require an attendance on the sacraments of the New Testament, is exposed to damnation, by virtue of the law or covenant of works. It may moreover be argued, that all sins whatsoever are breaches of the law or covenant of works, because all sins, even breaches of the positive precepts, as well as others, have atonement by the death of Christ: but what Christ died for, was to satisfy the law, or to bear the curse of the law; as appears by Gal. iii. 10—13. and Rom. vii. 3, 4.

So that Christ's laying down his life might be part of that obedience by which we are justified, though it was a positive precept not given to Adam. It was doubtless Christ's main act of obedience, because it was obedience to a command that was attended with immensely the greatest difficulty, and so to a command that was the greatest trial of his obedience. His respect shown to God in it, and his honour to God's authority, was proportionably great. It is spoken of in scripture as Christ's principal act of obedience. Philip. ii. 7, 8. "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Heb. v. 8. "Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." It was mainly by this act of obedience that Christ purchased so glorious a reward for himself; Philip. ii. 8, 9. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." And it therefore follows from what has been already said, that it is mainly by this act of obedience that believers in Christ also have the reward of glory, or come to partake with Christ in his

glory. We are as much saved by the death of Christ, as his yielding himself to die was an act of obedience, as we are, as it was a propitiation for our sins: For as it was not the only act of obedience that merited, he having performed meritorious acts of obedience through the whole course of his life; so neither was it the only suffering that was propitiatory; all his sufferings through the whole course of his life being propitiatory, as well as every act of obedience meritorious. Indeed this was his principal suffering; and it was as much his principal act of obedience.

Hence we may see how that the death of Christ did not only make atonement, but also merited eternal life; and hence we may see how by the blood of Christ we are not only redeemed from sin, but redeemed unto God; and therefore the Scripture seems every where to attribute the whole of salvation to the blood of Christ. This precious blood is as much the main price by which heaven is purchased, as it is the main price by which we are redeemed from hell. The positive righteousness of Christ, or that price by which he merited, was of equal value with that by which he satisfied; for indeed it was the same price. He spilled his blood to satisfy, and by reason of the infinite dignity of his person, his sufferings were looked upon as of infinite value, and equivalent to the eternal sufferings of a finite creature. And he spilled his blood out of respect to the honour of God's majesty, and in submission to his authority, who had commanded him so to do: and his obedience therein was of infinite value; both because of the dignity of the person that performed it, and because he put himself to infinite expence to perform it, whereby the infinite degree of his regard to God's authority appeared.

One would wonder what Arminians mean by Christ's merits. They talk of Christ's merits as much as any body, and yet deny the imputation of Christ's positive righteousness. What should there be that any one should merit or deserve any thing by, besides righteousness or goodness? If any thing that Christ did or suffered, merited or deserved any thing, it was by virtue of the goodness, or righteousness, or holiness of it. If Christ's sufferings and death merited heaven, it must be because there was an excellent righteousness and transcendent moral goodness in that act of laying down his life. And if by that excellent righteousness he merited heaven for us; then surely that righteousness is reckoned to our account, that we have the benefit of it, or, which is the same thing, it is imputed to us.

Thus, I hope, I have made it evident, that the righteousness of Christ is indeed imputed to us. I proceed now to the

Third and last thing under this argument, That this doctrine, of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by our own virtue or sincere obedience. If acceptance to God's favour, and a title to life, be given to believers as the reward of Christ's obedience, then it is not given as the reward of our own obedience. In what respect soever Christ is our Saviour, that doubtless excludes our being our own saviours in that same respect. If we can be our own saviours in the same respect that Christ is, it will thence follow, that the salvation of Christ is needless in that respect; according to the apostle's reasoning, Gal. v. 4. "Christ is rendered of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." Doubtless, it is Christ's prerogative to be our Saviour in that sense wherein he is our Saviour. And therefore, if it be by his obedience that we are justified, then it is not by our own obedience.

Here perhaps it may be said, that a title to salvation is not directly given as the reward of our obedience; for that is not by any thing of ours, but only by Christ's satisfaction and righteousness; but yet an interest in that satisfaction and righteousness is given as a reward of our obedience.

But this does not at all help the case; for this is to ascribe as much to our obedience as if we ascribed salvation to it directly, without the intervention of Christ's righteousness. For it would be as great a thing for God to give us Christ, and his satisfaction and righteousness, in reward for our obedience, as to give us heaven immediately; it would be as great a reward, and as great a testimony of respect to our obedience. And if God gives as great a thing as salvation for our obedience, why could he not as well give salvation itself directly? and then there would have been no need of Christ's righteousness. And indeed if God gives us Christ, or an interest in him, properly in reward of our obedience, he does really give us salvation in reward for our obedience: for the former implies the latter; yea it implies it, as the greater implies the less. So that indeed it exalts our virtue and obedience more, to suppose that God gives us Christ in reward of that virtue and obedience, than if he should give salvation without Christ.

The thing that the Scripture guards and militates against, is our imagining that it is our own goodness, virtue, or excellency, that instates us in God's acceptance and favour. But

to suppose that God gives us an interest in Christ in reward for our virtue, is as great an argument that it instates us in God's favour, as if he bestowed a title to eternal life as its direct reward. If God gives us an interest in Christ as a reward of our obedience, it will then follow, that we are instated in God's acceptance and favour by our own obedience, antecedent to our having an interest in Christ. For a rewarding any one's excellency, evermore supposes favour and acceptance on the account of that excellency: It is the very notion of a reward, that it is a good thing, bestowed in testimony of respect and favour for the virtue or excellency rewarded. So that it is not by virtue of our interest in Christ and his merits, that we first come into favour with God, according to this scheme; for we are in God's favour before we have any interest in those merits; in that we have an interest in those merits given as a fruit of God's favour for our own virtue. If our interest in Christ be the fruit of God's favour, then it cannot be the ground of it. If God did not accept us, and had no favour for us for our own excellency, he never would bestow so great a reward upon us, as a right in Christ's satisfaction and righteousness. So that such a scheme destroys itself; for it supposes that Christ's satisfaction and righteousness are necessary for us to recommend us to the favour of God; and yet supposes that we have God's favour and acceptance before we have Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, and have these given as a fruit of God's favour.

Indeed, neither salvation itself, nor Christ the Saviour, are given as a reward of any thing in man: They are not given as a reward of faith, nor any thing else of ours: We are not united to Christ as a reward of our faith, but have union with him by faith, only as faith is the very act of uniting or closing *on our part.* As when a man offers himself to a woman in marriage, he does not give himself to her as a *reward* of her receiving him in marriage. Her receiving him is not considered as a worthy deed in her for which he rewards her by giving himself to her; but it is by her receiving him that the union is made, by which she hath him for her husband. It is *on her part* the unition itself. By these things it appears how contrary to the gospel of Christ their scheme is, who say that faith justifies as a principle of obedience, or as a leading act of obedience; or (as others) the sum and comprehension of all evangelical obedience. For by this, the obedience or virtue that is in faith gives it its justifying influence; and that is

the same thing as to say, that we are justified by our own obedience, virtue, or goodness.

Having thus considered the evidence of the truth of the doctrine, I proceed now to the

III. Thing proposed, viz. "To shew in what sense the acts of a Christian life, or of evangelical obedience, may be looked upon to be concerned in this affair."

From what has been said already, it is manifest that they cannot have any concern in this affair as good works, or by virtue of any moral goodness in them; not as works of the law, or as that moral excellency, or any part of it, which is the fulfilment of that great, universal, and everlasting law or covenant of works which the great lawgiver has established, as the highest and unalterable rule of judgment, which Christ alone answers, or does any thing towards it.

It having been shown out of the Scripture, that it is only by faith, or the soul's receiving and uniting to the Saviour who has wrought our righteousness, that we are justified; it therefore remains, that the acts of a Christian life cannot be concerned in this affair any otherwise than as they imply, and are the expressions of faith, and may be looked upon as so many acts of reception of Christ the Saviour. But the determining what concerns acts of Christian obedience can have in justification in this respect, will depend on the resolving of another point, viz. Whether any other act of faith besides the first act, has any concern in our justification, or how far perseverance in faith, or the continued and renewed acts of faith, have influence in this affair. And it seems manifest that justification is by the first act of faith, in some respects, in a peculiar manner, because a sinner is actually and finally justified as soon as he has performed one act of faith; and faith in its first act does, virtually at least, depend on God for perseverance, and intitles to this among other benefits. But yet the perseverance of faith is not excluded in this affair; it is not only certainly connected with justification, but it is not to be excluded from that on which the justification of a sinner has a dependence, or that by which he is justified.

I have shown that the way in which justification has a dependence on faith, is, that it is the qualification on which the congruity of an interest in the righteousness of Christ depends, or wherein such a fitness consists. But the consideration of the perseverance of faith cannot be excluded out of this congruity or fitness, for it is congruous that he that believes in Christ

should have an interest in Christ's righteousness, and so in the eternal benefits purchased by it, because faith is that by which the soul hath union or oneness with Christ; and there is a natural congruity in it, that they who are one with Christ should have a joint interest with him in his eternal benefits; but yet this congruity depends on its being an abiding union. As it is needful that the branch should abide in the vine, in order to its receiving the lasting benefits of the root; so it is necessary that the soul should abide in Christ, in order to its receiving those lasting benefits of God's final acceptance and favour. John, xv. 6. 7. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Verse 9. 10. "Continue ye in my love. If ye keep (or abide in) my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." There is the same reason why it is necessary that the union with Christ should remain, as why it should be begun; why it should continue to be, as why it should once be. If it should be begun without remaining, the beginning would be in vain. In order to the soul's being now in a justified state, and now free from condemnation, it is necessary that it should now be in Christ, and not merely that it should once have been in him. Rom. viii. 1. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The soul is saved in Christ, as being now in him, when the salvation is bestowed, and not merely as remembering that it once was in him. Philip. iii. 9. "That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." 1 John, ii. 28. "And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." In order to persons being blessed after death, it is necessary not only that they should once be in him, but that they should die in him. Rev. xiv. 13. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."—And there is the same reason why faith, the uniting qualification, should remain, in order to the union's remaining; as why it should once be, in order to the union's once being.

So that although the sinner is actually and finally justified on the first act of faith, yet the perseverance of faith, even then, comes into consideration, as one thing on which the fitness of acceptance to life depends. God, in the act of justification, which is passed on a sinner's first believing, has respect

to perseverance, as being virtually contained in that first act of faith; and it is looked upon, and taken by him that justifies, as being as it were a property in that faith. God has respect to the believer's continuance in faith, and he is justified by that, as though it already were, because by divine establishment it shall follow; and it being by divine constitution connected with that first faith, as much as if it were a property in it, it is then considered as such, and so justification is not suspended; but were it not for this, it would be needful that it should be suspended, till the sinner had actually persevered in faith.

And that it is so, that God in the act of final justification which he passes at the sinner's conversion, has respect to perseverance in faith, and future acts of faith, as being virtually implied in the first act, is further manifest by this, viz. That in a sinner's justification, at his conversion there is virtually contained a forgiveness as to eternal and deserved punishment, not only of all past sins, but also of all future infirmities and acts of sin that they shall be guilty of; because that first justification is decisive and final. And yet pardon, in the order of nature, properly follows the crime, and also follows those acts of repentance and faith that respect the crime pardoned, as is manifest both from reason and scripture. David, in the beginning of Psalm xxxii. speaks of the forgiveness of sins which were doubtless committed long after he was first godly, as being consequent on those sins, and on his repentance and faith with respect to them; and yet this forgiveness is spoken of by the apostle in the 4th of Romans, as an instance of justification by faith. Probably the sin David there speaks of is the same that he committed in the matter of Uriah, and so the pardon the same with that release from death, or eternal punishment, which the prophet Nathan speaks of, 2 Sam. xii. 13. "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Not only does the manifestation of this pardon follow the sin in the order of time, but the pardon itself, in the order of nature, follows David's repentance and faith with rspect to this sin; for it is spoken of in the xxxiid Psalm, as depending on it.

But in as much as a sinner, in his first justification, is forever justified and freed from all obligation to eternal punishment; it hence of necessity follows, that future faith and repentance are beheld, in that justification, as virtually contained in that first faith and repentance; because repentance of those future sins, and faith in a Redeemer, with respect to them, or, at least, the continuance of that habit and principle

in the heart that has such an actual repentance and faith in its nature and tendency, is now made sure by God's promise.—If remission of sins, committed after conversion, in the order of nature, follows that faith and repentance that is after them, then it follows that future sins are respected in the first justification, no otherwise than as future faith and repentance are respected in it. And future repentance and faith are looked upon by him that justifies, as virtually implied in the first repentance and faith, in the same manner as justification from future sins is virtually implied in the first justification; which is the thing that was to be proved.

And besides, if no other act of faith could be concerned in justification but the first act, it will then follow, that Christians ought never to seek justification by any other act of faith. For if justification is not to be obtained by after acts of faith, then surely it is not a duty to seek it by such acts: And so it can never be a duty for persons after they are once converted, by faith to seek to God, or believingly to look to him for the remission of sin, or deliverance from the guilt of it, because deliverance from the guilt of sin is part of what belongs to justification. And if it be not proper for converts by faith to look to God through Christ for it, then it will follow, that it is not proper for them to pray for it; for Christian prayer to God for a blessing, is but an expression of faith in God for that blessing; prayer is only the voice of faith. But if these things are so, it will follow that the petition in the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our debts*, is not proper to be put up by disciples of Christ, or to be used in Christian assemblies; and that Christ improperly directed his disciples to use that petition, when they were all of them, except Judas, converted before. The debt that Christ directs his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of, can mean nothing else but the punishment that sin deserves, or the debt that we owe to divine justice, the ten thousand talents we owe our Lord. To pray that God would forgive our debts, is undoubtedly the same thing as to pray that God would release us from obligation to due punishment; but releasing from obligation to the punishment due to sin, and forgiving the debt that we owe to divine justice, is what appertains to justification.

And then to suppose that no after acts of faith are concerned in the business of justification, and so that it is not proper for any ever to seek justification by such acts, would be for ever to cut off those Christians that are doubtful concerning their first act of faith, from the joy and peace of believing. As the business of a justifying faith is to obtain pardon and peace

with God, by looking to God, and trusting in him for these blessings; so the joy and peace of that faith is in the apprehension of pardon and peace obtained by such a trust. This a Christian that is doubtful of his first act of faith cannot have from that act, because, by the supposition, he is doubtful whether it be an act of faith, and so whether he did obtain pardon and peace by that act. The proper remedy, in such a case, is now by faith to look to God in Christ for these blessings: but he is cut off from this remedy, because he is uncertain whether he has warrant so to do; for he does not know but that he has believed already; and if so, then he has no warrant to look to God by faith for these blessings now, because, by the supposition, no new act of faith is a proper means of obtaining these blessings. And so he can never properly obtain the joy of faith; for there are acts of true faith that are very weak, and the first act may be so as well as others: it may be like the first motion of the infant in the womb; it may be so weak an act, that the Christian, by examining it, may never be able to determine whether it was a true act of faith or no; and it is evident from fact, and abundant experience, that many Christians are for ever at a loss to determine which was their first act of faith. And those saints who have had a good degree of satisfaction concerning their faith, may be subject to great declensions and falls, in which case they are liable to great fears of eternal punishment; and the proper way of deliverance, is to forsake their sin by repentance, and by faith now to come to Christ for deliverance from the deserved eternal punishment; but this it would not be, if deliverance from that punishment was not this way to be obtained.

But what is a still more plain and direct evidence of what I am now arguing for, is, that the act of faith which Abraham exercised in the great promise of the covenant of grace that God made to him, of which it is expressly said, Gal. iii. 6. "It was accounted to him for righteousness"—the grand instance and proof that the apostle so much insists upon throughout the 4th chapter of Romans, and 3d chapter of Galatians, to confirm his doctrine of justification by faith alone—was not Abraham's first act of faith, but was exerted long after he had by faith forsaken his own country, Heb. xi. 8. and had been treated as an eminent friend of God.

Moreover, the apostle Paul, in the 3d chapter of Philip. tells us how earnestly he sought justification by faith, or to win Christ and obtain that righteousness which was by the faith of him, in what he did after his conversion. Verse, 8. 9. "For

whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And in the two next verses he expresses the same thing in other words, and tells us how he went through sufferings, and became conformable to Christ's death, that he might be a partaker with Christ in the benefit of his resurrection; which the same apostle elsewhere teaches us, is especially justification. Christ's resurrection was his justification; in this, he that was put to death in the flesh, was justified by the Spirit; and he that was delivered for our offences, rose again for our justification. And the apostle tells us in the verses that follow in that 3d chapter of Philippians, that he thus sought to attain the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, and so to partake of the benefit of his resurrection, still as though he had not already attained, but that he continued to follow after it.

On the whole, it appears, that the perseverance of faith is necessary, even to the congruity of justification; and that not the less, because a sinner is justified, and perseverance promised, on the first act of faith, but God, in that justification, has respect, not only to the past act of faith, but to his own promise of future acts, and to the fitness of a qualification beheld as yet only in his own promise. And that perseverance in faith is thus necessary to salvation, not merely as a *sine qua non*, or as an universal concomitant of it, but by reason of such an influence and dependence, seems manifest by many Scriptures; I would mention two or three; Heb. iii. 6 "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Verse 14. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." Chap. vi. 12. "Be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Rom. xi. 20. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off; but thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear."

And, as the congruity to a final justification depends on perseverance in faith, as well as the first act, so oftentimes the manifestation of justification in the conscience, arises a great deal more from after acts, than the first act. And all the difference whereby the first act of faith has a concern in this affair that is peculiar, seems to be, as it were, only an

accidental difference, arising from the circumstance of time, or its being first in order of time; and not from any peculiar respect that God has to it, or any influence it has of a peculiar nature, in the affair of our salvation.

And thus it is that a truly Christian walk, and the acts of an evangelical, child-like, believing obedience, are concerned in the affair of our justification, and seem to be sometimes so spoken of in Scripture, viz. as an expression of a persevering faith in the Son of God, the only Saviour. Faith unites to Christ, and so gives a congruity to justification, not merely as remaining a dormant principle in the heart, but as being and appearing in its active expressions. The obedience of a Christian, so far as it is truly evangelical, and performed with the spirit of the Son sent forth into the heart, has all relation to Christ, the Mediator, and is but an expression of the soul's believing unition to Christ. All evangelical works are works of that faith that worketh by love; and every such act of obedience, wherein it is inward, and the act of the soul, is only a new effective act of reception of Christ, and adherence to the glorious Saviour. Hence that of the apostle, Gal. ii. 20. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God." And hence we are directed, in whatever we do, whether in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Col. iii. 17.

And that God in justification has respect, not only to the first act of faith, but also to future persevering acts, as expressed in life, seems manifest by Rom. i. 17. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." And Heb. x. 38, 39; "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul."

So that as was before said of faith, so may it be said of a child-like believing obedience, it has no concern in justification by any virtue or excellency in it; but only as there is a reception of Christ in it. And this is no more contrary to the apostle's frequent assertion of our being justified without the works of the law, than to say that we are justified by faith: for faith is as much a work, or act of Christian obedience, as the expressions of faith, in spiritual life and walk. And therefore, as we say that faith does not justify as a work, so we say of all these effective expressions of faith.

This is the reverse of the scheme of our modern divines, who hold, that faith justifies only as an act or expression of obedience; whereas, in truth, obedience has no concern in justification, any otherwise than as an expression of faith.

I now proceed to the

IV. Thing proposed, viz. To answer objections.

Object. 1. We frequently find promises of eternal life and salvation, and sometimes of justification itself, made to our own virtue and obedience. Eternal life is promised to obedience, in Rom. ii. 7. "To them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality; eternal life:" And the like in innumerable other places. And justification itself is promised to that virtue of a forgiving spirit or temper in us, Matt. vi. 14. "For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." All allow that justification in great part consists in the forgiveness of sins.

To this I answer,

1. These things being promised to our virtue and obedience, argues no more, than that there is a connection between them and evangelical obedience; which, I have already observed, is not the thing in dispute. All that can be proved by obedience and salvation being connected in the promise, is, that obedience and salvation are connected in fact; which no body denies; and whether it be owned or denied, is, as has been shewn, nothing to the purpose. There is no need that an admission to a title to salvation, should be given on the account of our obedience, in order to the promises being true. If we find such a promise, that he that obeys shall be saved, or he that is holy shall be justified; all that is needful, in order to such promises being true, is, that it be really so, that he that obeys shall be saved, and that holiness and justification shall indeed go together. That proposition may be a truth, that he that obeys shall be saved; because obedience and salvation are connected together in fact; and yet an acceptance to a title to salvation not be granted upon the account of any of our own virtue or obedience. What is a promise, but only a declaration of future truth, for the comfort and encouragement of the person to whom it is declared? Promises are conditional propositions; and, as has been already observed, it is not the thing in dispute, whether other things besides faith may not

have the place of the condition in such propositions wherein pardon and salvation are the consequent.

2. Promises may rationally be made to signs and evidences of faith, and yet the thing promised not be upon the account of the sign, but the thing signified. Thus, for instance, human government may rationally make promises of such and such privileges to those that can shew such evidences of their being free of such a city, or members of such a corporation, or descended of such a family; when it is not at all for the sake of that which is the evidence or sign, in itself considered, that they are admitted to such a privilege, but only and purely for the sake of that which it is an evidence of. And though God does not stand in need of signs to know whether we have true faith or not, yet our own consciences do; so that it is much for our comfort that promises are made to signs of faith. Finding in ourselves a forgiving temper and disposition, may be a most proper and natural evidence to our consciences, that our hearts have, in a sense of our own utter unworthiness, truly closed and fallen in with the way of free and infinitely gracious forgiveness of our sins by Jesus Christ; whence we may be enabled, with the greater comfort, to apply to ourselves the promises of forgiveness by Christ.

3. It has been just now shown, how that acts of evangelical obedience are indeed concerned in our justification itself, and are not excluded from that condition that justification depends upon, without the least prejudice to that doctrine of justification by faith, without any goodness of our own, that has been maintained; and therefore it can be no objection against this doctrine, that we have sometimes in Scripture promises of pardon and acceptance made to such acts of obedience.

4. Promises of particular benefits implied in justification and salvation, may especially be fitly made to such expressions and evidences of faith as they have a peculiar natural likeness and suitableness to. As forgiveness is promised to a forgiving spirit in us; obtaining mercy is fitly promised to mercifulness in us, and the like: and that upon several accounts; they are the most natural evidences of our heart's closing with those benefits by faith; for they do especially shew the sweet accord and consent that there is between the heart and these benefits; and by reason of the natural likeness that there is between the virtue and the benefit, the one has the greater tendency to bring the other to mind; the practice of the virtue tends the more to renew the sense, and refresh the hope of the blessing

promised; and also to convince the conscience of the justice of being denied the benefit, if the duty be neglected. Besides the sense and manifestation of divine forgiveness in our own consciences—yea, and many exercises of God's forgiving mercy, (as it respects God's fatherly displeasure) granted after justification, through the course of a Christian's life—may be given as the proper rewards of a forgiving spirit, and yet this not be at all to the prejudice of the doctrine we have maintained; as will more fully appear, when we come to answer another objection hereafter to be mentioned.

Object. 2. Our own obedience, and inherent holiness, is necessary to prepare men for heaven; and therefore is doubtless what recommends persons to God's acceptance, as the heirs of heaven.

To this I answer,

1. Our own obedience being necessary in order to a preparation for an actual bestowment of glory, is no argument that it is the thing upon the account of which we are accepted to a right to it. God may, and does do many things to prepare the saints for glory, after he has accepted them as the heirs of glory. A parent may do much to prepare a child for an inheritance in its education, after the child is an heir; yea, there are many things necessary to fit a child for the actual possession of the inheritance, yet not necessary in order to its having a right to the inheritance.

5. If every thing that is necessary to prepare men for glory must be the proper condition of justification, then perfect holiness is the condition of justification. Men must be made perfectly holy, before they are admitted to the enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven; for there must in no wise enter in there any spiritual defilement. And therefore, when a saint dies, he leaves all his sin and corruption when he leaves the body.

Object. 3. Our obedience is not only indissolubly connected with salvation, and preparatory to it, but the Scripture expressly speaks of bestowing eternal blessings as rewards for the good deeds of the saints. Matt. x. 42. "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward." 1 Cor. iii. 8. "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." And in many other places. This seems to militate against the doctrine that has been maintained, two ways: (1.) The bestowing a reward, carries in it a respect to a moral fitness in the thing rewarded to

the reward; the very notion of a reward being a benefit bestowed in testimony of acceptance of, and respect to, the goodness or amiableness of some qualification or work in the person rewarded. Besides, the Scripture seems to explain itself in this matter, in Rev. iii. 4. "Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy." This is here given as the reason why they should have such a reward, "because they were worthy;" which, though we suppose it to imply no proper merit, yet it at least implies a moral fitness, or that the excellency of their virtue in God's sight recommends them to such a reward; which seems directly repugnant to what has been supposed, viz. that we are accepted, and approved of God, as the heirs of salvation, not out of regard to the excellency of our own virtue or goodness, or any moral fitness therein to such a reward, but only on the account of the dignity and moral fitness of Christ's righteousness. (2.) Our being eternally rewarded for our own holiness and good works, necessarily supposes that our future happiness will be greater or smaller, in some proportion as our own holiness and obedience is more or less; and that there are different degrees of glory, according to different degrees of virtue and good works, is a doctrine very expressly and frequently taught us in Scripture. But this seems quite inconsistent with the saints all having their future blessedness as a reward of Christ's righteousness: For if Christ's righteousness be imputed to all, and this be what intitles each one to glory, then it is the same righteousness that intitles one to glory which intitles another. But if all have glory as the reward of the same righteousness, why have not all the same glory? Does not the same righteousness merit as much glory when imputed to one as when imputed to another?

In answer to the *first* part of this objection, I would observe, that it does not argue that we are justified by our good deeds, that we shall have eternal blessings in reward for them; for it is in consequence of our justification, that our good deeds become rewardable with spiritual and eternal rewards. The acceptableness, and so the rewardableness of our virtue, is not antecedent to justification, but follows it, and is built entirely upon it; which is the reverse of what those in the adverse scheme of justification suppose, viz. that justification is built on the acceptableness and rewardableness of our virtue. They suppose that a saving interest in Christ is given as a reward of our virtue, or, (which is the same thing), as a testimony of

God's acceptance of our excellency in our virtue. But the contrary is true; that God's respect to our virtue as our amiableness in his sight, and his acceptance of it as rewardable, is entirely built on our interest in Christ already established. So that the relation to Christ, whereby believers in Scripture language are said to be in Christ, is the very foundation of our virtues and good deeds being accepted of God, and so of their being rewarded; for a reward is a testimony of acceptance. For we, and all that we do, are accepted only in the beloved, Eph. i. 6. Our sacrifices are acceptable, only through our interest in him, and through his worthiness and preciousness being, as it were, made ours. 1 Pet. ii. 4. 5. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Here being actually built on this stone, precious to God, is mentioned as all the ground of the acceptableness of our good works to God, and their becoming also precious in his eyes. So, Heb. xiii. 21. "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." And hence we are directed, whatever we offer to God, to offer it in Christ's name, as expecting to have it accepted no other way, than from the value that God has to that name. Col. iii. 17. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." To act in Christ's name, is to act under him as our head, and as having him to stand for us, and represent us to God-ward.

The reason of this may be seen from what has been already said, to shew it is not meet that any thing in us should be accepted of God as any excellency of our persons, until we are actually in Christ, and justified through him. The loveliness of the virtue of fallen creatures is nothing in the sight of God, till he beholds them in Christ, and clothed with his righteousness. 1. Because till then we stand condemned before God, by his own holy law, to his utter rejection and abhorrence. And, 2. Because we are infinitely guilty before him; and the loveliness of our virtue bears no proportion to our guilt, and must therefore pass for nothing before a strict judge. And, 3. Because our good deeds and virtuous acts themselves are in a sense corrupt; and the hatefulness of the corruption of them, if we are beheld as we are in ourselves, or separate from Christ, infinitely outweighs the loveliness of the good that is in them.

So that if no other sin was considered but only that which attends the act of virtue itself, the loveliness vanishes into nothing in comparison of it; and therefore the virtue must pass for nothing, out of Christ. Not only are our best duties defiled, in being attended with the exercises of sin and corruption which precede, follow, and are intermingled with them; but even the holy acts themselves, and the gracious exercises of the godly are defective. Though the act most simply considered is good, yet take the acts in their measure and dimensions, and the manner in which they are exerted, and they are sinfully defective; there is that defect in them that may well be called the corruption of them. That defect is properly sin, an expression of a vile sinfulness of heart, and what tends to provoke the just anger of God: not because the exercise of love and other grace is not equal to God's loveliness; for it is impossible the love of creatures (men or angels) should be so; but because the act is so very disproportionate to the occasion given for love or other grace, considering God's loveliness, the manifestation that is made of it, the exercises of kindness, the capacity of human nature, and our advantages (and the like) together.—A negative expression of corruption may be as truly sin, and as just cause of provocation, as a positive. Thus if a worthy and excellent person should, from mere generosity and goodness, exceedingly lay out himself, and with great expence and suffering save another's life, or redeem him from some extreme calamity; and if that other person should never thank him for it, or express the least gratitude any way; this would be a negative expression of his ingratitude and baseness; but is equivalent to an act of ingratitude, or positive exercise of a base unworthy spirit; and is truly an expression of it, and brings as much blame as if he by some positive act had much injured another person. And so it would be, (only in a lesser degree), if the gratitude was but very small, bearing no proportion to the benefit and obligation: as if, for so great and extraordinary a kindness, he should express no more gratitude than would have been becoming towards a person who had only given him a cup of water when thirsty, or shewn him the way in a journey when at a loss, or had done him some such small kindness. If he should come to his benefactor to express his gratitude, and should do after this manner, he might truly be said to act unworthily and odiously; he would shew a most ungrateful spirit. His doing after such a manner might justly be abhorred by all; and yet the gratitude, that little there is of it, most simply considered, and so far as it goes, is good. And

so it is with respect to our exercise of love, and gratitude, and other graces, towards God; they are defectively corrupt and sinful, and, take them as they are, in their manner and measure, might justly be odious and provoking to God, and would necessarily be so, were we beheld out of Christ. For in that this defect is sin, it is infinitely hateful; and so the hatefulness of the very act infinitely outweighs the loveliness of it; because all sin has infinite hatefulness and heinousness; but our holiness has but little value and loveliness, as has been elsewhere demonstrated.

Hence, though it be true that the saints are rewarded for their good works, yet it is for Christ's sake only, and not for the excellency of their works in themselves considered or beheld separately from Christ; for so they have no excellency in God's sight, or acceptableness to him, as has now been shewn. It is acknowledged that God, in rewarding the holiness and good works of believers, does in some respect give them happiness as a testimony of his respect to the loveliness of their holiness and good works in his sight; for that is the very notion of a reward. But it is in a very different sense from what would have been if man had not fallen; which would have been to bestow eternal life on man, as a testimony of God's respect to the loveliness of what man did, considered as in itself, and as in man separately by himself, and not beheld as a member of Christ. In which sense also, the scheme of justification we are opposing necessarily supposes the excellency of our virtue to be respected and rewarded; for it supposes a saving interest in Christ itself to be given as a reward of it.

Two things come to pass, relating to the saint's reward for their inherent righteousness, by virtue of their relation to Christ. 1. The guilt of their persons is all done away, and the the pollution and hatefulness that attends and is in their good works, is hid. 2. Their relation to Christ adds a positive value and dignity to their good works in God's sight. That little holiness, and those faint and feeble acts of love, and other grace, receive an exceeding value in the sight of God, by virtue of God's beholding them as in Christ, and as it were members of one so infinitely worthy in his eyes; and that because God looks upon the persons as of greater dignity on this account. Isai. xliii. 4. "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable." God, for Christ's sake, and because they are members of his own righteous and dear Son, sets an exceeding value upon their persons; and hence it ollows,

that he also sets a great value upon their good acts and offerings. The same love and obedience in a person of greater dignity and value in God's sight, is more valuable in his eyes than in one of less dignity. Love is valuable in proportion to the dignity of the person whose love it is; because, so far as any one gives his love to another, he gives himself, in that he gives his heart. But this is a more excellent offering, in proportion as the person whose self is offered is more worthy. Believers are become immensely more honourable in God's esteem by virtue of their relation to Christ, than man would have been considered as by himself, though he had been free from sin; as a mean person becomes more honourable when married to a king. Hence God will probably reward the little weak love, and poor and exceeding imperfect obedience of believers in Christ, with more glorious reward than he would have done Adam's perfect obedience. According to the tenor of the first covenant, the person was to be accepted and rewarded, only for the work's sake; but by the covenant of grace, the work is accepted and rewarded, only for the person's sake; the person being beheld antecedently as a member of Christ, and clothed with his righteousness. So that though the saints' inherent holiness is rewarded, yet this very reward is indeed not the less founded on the worthiness and righteousness of Christ. None of the value that their works have in his sight, nor any of the acceptance they have with him, is out of Christ, and out of his righteousness; but his worthiness as mediator is the prime and only foundation on which all is built, and the universal source whence all arises. God indeed doth great things out of regard to the saints' loveliness, but it is only as a secondary and derivative loveliness. When I speak of a derivative loveliness, I do not mean only, that the qualifications themselves accepted as lovely, are derived from Christ, from his power and purchase; but that the acceptance of them as a loveliness, and all the value that is set upon them, and all their connection with the reward, is founded in, and derived from Christ's righteousness and worthiness.

If we suppose that not only higher degrees of glory in heaven, but heaven itself, is in some respect given in reward for the holiness and good works of the saints, in this secondary and derivative sense, it will not prejudice the doctrine we have maintained. It is no way impossible that God may bestow heaven's glory wholly out of respect to Christ's righteousness, and yet in reward for man's inherent holiness, in different respects, and different ways. It may be only Christ's righteous-

ness that God has respect to, for its own sake, the independent acceptableness and dignity of it being sufficient of itself to recommend all that believe in Christ to a title to this glory; and so it may be only by this that persons enter into a title to heaven, or have their prime right to it: And yet God may also have respect to the saints' own holiness, for Christ's sake, and as deriving a value from Christ's merit, which he may testify in bestowing heaven upon them. The saints being beheld as members of Christ, their obedience is looked upon by God as something of Christ's, it being the obedience of the members of Christ; as the sufferings of the members of Christ are looked upon, in some respect, as the sufferings of Christ. Hence the apostle, speaking of his suffering, says, Col. i. 24. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." To the same purpose is Matth. xxv. 25, &c. I was an hungered, naked, sick, and in prison, &c. And so that in Rev. xi. 8.; "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

By the merit and righteousness of Christ, such favour of God towards the believer may be obtained, as that God may hereby be already, as it were, disposed to make them perfectly and eternally happy. But yet this does not hinder, but that God in his wisdom may choose to bestow this perfect and eternal happiness in this way, viz. in some respect as a reward of their holiness and obedience. It is not impossible but that the blessedness may be bestowed as a reward for that which is done after that an interest is already obtained in that favour, which (to speak of God after the manner of men) disposes God to bestow the blessedness. Our heavenly Father may already have that favour for a child, whereby he may be thoroughly ready to give the child an inheritance, because he is his child; which he is by the purchase of Christ's righteousness: and yet that the Father may choose to bestow the inheritance on the child in a way of reward for his dutifulness, and behaving in a manner becoming a child. And so great a reward may not be judged more than a meet reward for his dutifulness; but that so great a reward is judged meet, does not arise from the excellency of the obedience absolutely considered, but from his standing in so near and honourable a relation to God, as that of a child, which is obtained only by the righteousness of Christ. And thus the reward, and the greatness of it, arises properly from the righteousness of Christ; though it be indeed in some

sort the reward of their obedience. As a Father might justly esteem the inheritance no more than a meet reward for the obedience of his child, and yet esteem it more than a meet reward for the obedience of a servant. The favour whence a believer's heavenly Father bestows the eternal inheritance, and his title as an heir, is founded in that relation he stands in to him as a child, purchased by Christ's righteousness; though he in wisdom chooses to bestow in it such a way, and therein to testify his acceptance of the amiableness of his obedience in Christ.

Believers having a title to heaven by faith antecedent to their obedience, or its being absolutely promised to them before, does not hinder but that the actual bestowment of heaven may also be a testimony of God's regard to their obedience, though performed afterwards. Thus it was with Abraham, the father and pattern of all believers: God bestowed upon him that blessing of multiplying his seed as the stars of heaven, and causing that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, in reward for his obedience in offering up his son Isaac, Gen. xxii. 16, 17, 18. "And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." And yet the very same blessings had been from time to time promised to Abraham, in the most positive terms, and the promise, with great solemnity, confirmed and sealed to him; as chap. xii. 2, 3. chap. xiii. 16. chap. xv. 1, 4—7. &c.; chap. xvii. throughout; chap. xviii. 10, 18.

From what has been said we may easily solve the difficulty arising from that text in Rev. iii. 4. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy;" which is parallel with that text in Luke, xx. 35. "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead." I allow (as in the objection) that this worthiness does doubtless denote a moral fitness to the reward, or that God looks on these glorious benefits as a meet testimony of his regard to the value which their persons and performances have in his sight.

1. God looks on these glorious benefits as a meet testimony of his regard to the value which their persons have in his

sight. But he sets this value upon their persons purely for Christ's sake. They are such jewels, and have such preciousness in his eyes, only because they are beheld in Christ, and by reason of the worthiness of the head they are the members of, and the stock they are grafted into. And the value that God sets upon them on this account is so great, that God thinks meet, from regard to it, to admit them to such exceeding glory. The saints, on account of their relation to Christ, are such precious jewels in God's sight, that they are thought worthy of a place in his own crown. Mal. iii. 17. Zech. ix. 16. So far as the saints are said to be valuable in God's sight, on whatever account, so far may they properly be said to be worthy, or meet for that honour which is answerable to the value or price which God sets upon them. A child or wife of a prince is worthy to be treated with great honour; and therefore if a mean person should be adopted to be a child of a prince, or should be espoused to a prince, it would be proper to say, that she was worthy of such and such honour and respect, and there would be no force upon the words in saying, that she ought to have such respect paid her, for she is worthy, though it be only on account of her relation to the prince that she is so.

2. From the value God sets upon their persons, for the sake of Christ's worthiness, he also sets a high value on their virtue and performances. Their meek and quiet spirit is of great price in his sight. Their fruits are pleasant fruits, their offerings are an odour of sweet smell to him; and that because of the value he sets on their persons, as has been already observed and explained. This preciousness or high valuableness of believers is a moral fitness to a reward; and yet this valuableness is all in the righteousness of Christ, that is the foundation of it. The thing respected is not excellency in them separately by themselves, or in their virtue by itself, but the value in God's account arises from other considerations; which is the natural import of Luke, xx. 35. "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world," &c. and Luke, xxi. 36. "That ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." 2. Thess. i. 5. "That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."

There is a vast difference between this scheme, and what is supposed in the scheme of those that oppose the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This lays the foundation of first acceptance with God, and all actual salvation consequent upon it, wholly in Christ and his righteousness. On the contrary, in

their scheme, a regard to man's own excellency or virtue is supposed to be first, and to have the place of the first foundation in actual salvation, though not in that ineffectual redemption, which they suppose common to all. They lay the foundation of all discriminating salvation in man's own virtue and moral excellency. This is the very bottom stone in this affair; for they suppose that it is from regard to our virtue, that even a special interest in Christ itself is given. The foundation being thus contrary, the whole scheme becomes exceeding diverse and contrary; the one is an evangelical scheme, the other a legal one; the one is utterly inconsistent with our being justified by Christ's righteousness, the other not at all.

From what has been said, we may understand, not only how the forgiveness of sin granted in justification is indissolubly connected with a forgiving spirit in us, but how there may be many exercises of forgiving mercy granted in reward for our forgiving those who trespass against us. For none will deny but that there are many acts of divine forgiveness towards the saints, that do not presuppose an unjustified state immediately preceding that forgiveness. None will deny, that saints who never fell from a justified state, yet commit many sins which God forgives afterwards, by laying aside his fatherly displeasure. This forgiveness may be in reward for our forgiveness, without any prejudice to the doctrine that has been maintained, as well as other mercies and blessings consequent on justification.

With respect to the *second* part of the objection, that relates to the different degrees of glory, and the seeming inconsistence there is in it, that the degrees of glory in different saints should be greater or lesser according to their inherent holiness and good works, and yet, that every one's glory should be purchased with the price of the very same imputed righteousness,—I answer, That Christ, by his righteousness, purchased for every one complete and perfect happiness, according to his capacity. But this does not hinder but that the saints, being of various capacities, may have various degrees of happiness, and yet all their happiness be the fruit of Christ's purchase. Indeed it cannot be properly said, that Christ purchased any particular degree of happiness, so that the value of Christ's righteousness in the sight of God, is sufficient to raise a believer so high in happiness, and no higher, and so that if the believer were made happier, it would exceed the value of Christ's righteousness; but in general, Christ purchased eternal life, or perfect happiness for all, according to their several

capacities. The saints are as so many vessels of different sizes, cast into a sea of happiness, where every vessel is full; this Christ purchased for all. But after all, it is left to God's sovereign pleasure to determine the largeness of the vessel; Christ's righteousness meddles not with this matter. Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6, 7. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism," &c.—"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." God may dispense in this matter according to what rule he pleases, not the less for what Christ has done: He may dispense either without condition, or upon what condition he pleases to fix. It is evident that Christ's righteousness meddles not with this matter; for what Christ did was to fulfil the covenant of works; but the covenant of works did not meddle at all with this. If Adam had persevered in perfect obedience, he and his posterity would have had perfect and full happiness; every one's happiness would have so answered his capacity, that he would have been completely blessed; but God would have been at liberty to have made some of one capacity, and others of another, as he pleased.—The angels have obtained eternal life, or a state of confirmed glory, by a covenant of works, whose condition was perfect obedience; but yet some are higher in glory than others, according to the several capacities that God, according to his sovereign pleasure, hath given them. So that it being still left with God, notwithstanding the perfect obedience of the second Adam, to fix the degree of each one's capacity by what rule he pleases, he hath been pleased to fix the degree of capacity, and so of glory, by the proportion of the saints' grace and fruitfulness here. He gives higher degrees of glory, in reward for higher degrees of holiness and good works, because it pleases him; and yet all the happiness of each saint is indeed the fruit of the purchase of Christ's obedience. If it had been but one man that Christ had obeyed and died for, and it had pleased God to make him of a very large capacity, Christ's perfect obedience would have purchased that his capacity should be filled, and then all his happiness might properly be said to be the fruit of Christ's perfect obedience; though, if he had been of a less capacity, he would not have had so much happiness by the same obedience; and yet would have had as much as Christ merited for him. Christ's righteousness meddles not with the degree of happiness, any otherwise than as he merits that it should be full and perfect, according to the capacity: And so it may be said to be concerned in the degree of happi-

ness, as perfect is a degree with respect to imperfect; but it meddles not with degrees of perfect happiness.

This matter may be yet better understood, if we consider that Christ and the whole church of saints are, as it were, one body, of which he is the Head, and they members, of different place and capacity: Now the whole body, head, and members, have communion in Christ's righteousness; they are all partakers of the benefit of it; Christ himself the Head is rewarded for it, and every member is partaker of the benefit and reward. But it does by no means follow, that every part should equally partake of the benefit, but every part in proportion to its place and capacity; the head partakes of far more than other parts, and the more noble members partake of more than the inferior. As it is in a natural body that enjoys perfect health, the head, and the heart, and lungs, have a greater share of this health, they have it more seated in them, than the hands and feet, because they are parts of greater capacity; though the hands and feet are as much in perfect health as those nobler parts of the body. So it is in the mystical body of Christ, all the members are partakers of the benefit of the Head; but it is according to the different capacity and place they have in the body; and God determines that place and capacity as he pleases; he makes whom he pleases the foot, and whom he pleases the hand, and whom he pleases the lungs, &c. 1 Cor. xii. 18. "God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." God efficaciously determines the place and capacity of every member, by the different degrees of grace and assistance in the improvement of it in this world. Those that he intends for the highest place in the body, he gives them most of his Spirit, the greatest share of the divine nature, the Spirit and nature of Christ Jesus the head, and that assistance whereby they perform the most excellent works, and do most abound in them.

Object. 4. It may be objected against what has been supposed, (viz. That rewards are given to our good works, only in consequence of an interest in Christ, or in testimony of God's respect to the excellency or value of them in his sight, as built on an interest in Christ's righteousness already obtained.) That the Scripture speaks of an interest in Christ itself, as being given out of respect to our moral fitness. Matt. x. 37, 38, 39. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me: He that findeth his

life, shall lose it," &c. Worthiness here at least signifies a moral fitness, or an excellency that recommends: And this place seems to intimate as though it were from respect to a moral fitness that men are admitted even to an union with Christ, and interest in him; and therefore this worthiness cannot be consequent on being in Christ, and by the imputation of his worthiness, or from any value that is in us, or in our actions in God's sight, as beheld in Christ.

To this I *answer*, That though persons when they are *accepted*, are not accepted as *worthy*, yet when they are *rejected*, they are rejected as *unworthy*. He that does not love Christ above other things, but treats him with such indignity, as to set him below earthly things, shall be treated as unworthy of Christ; his unworthiness of Christ, especially in that particular, shall be marked against him, and imputed to him. And though he be a professing Christian, and live in the enjoyment of the gospel, and has been visibly ingrafted into Christ, and admitted as one of his disciples, as Judas was; yet he shall be thrust out in wrath, as a punishment of his vile treatment of Christ. The forementioned words do not imply, that if a man does love Christ above father and mother, &c. that he would be *worthy*; the most they imply is, that such a visible Christian shall be treated and thrust out as unworthy. He that believes is not received for the worthiness or moral fitness of faith; but yet the visible Christian is cast out by God, for the unworthiness and moral unfitness of unbelief. A being accepted as one of Christ's, is not the reward of believing; but being thrust out from being one of Christ's disciples, after a visible admission as such, is properly a punishment of unbelief. John, iii. 18. 19. "He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Salvation is promised to faith as a free gift, but damnation is threatened to unbelief as a debt, or punishment due to unbelief. They who believed while in the wilderness, did not enter into Canaan, because of the worthiness of their faith; but God sware in his wrath, that they that believed not should not enter in, because of the unworthiness of their unbelief. Admitting a soul to an union with Christ is an act of free and sovereign grace; but excluding at death, and at the day of judgment, those professors of Christianity who have had the

offers of a Saviour, and enjoyed great privileges as God's people, is a judicial proceeding, and a just punishment of their unworthy treatment of Christ. The design of this saying of Christ is to make them sensible of the unworthiness of their treatment of Christ, who professed him to be their Lord and Saviour, and set him below father and mother, &c. and not to shew the worthiness of loving him above father and mother. If a beggar should be offered any great and precious gift, but as soon as offered, should trample it under his feet, it might be taken from him, as unworthy to have it. Or if a malefactor should have his pardon offered him, that he might be freed from execution, and should only scoff at it, his pardon might be refused him, as unworthy of it; though if he had received it, he would not have had it for his worthiness, or as being recommended to it by his virtue; for his being a malefactor supposes him unworthy, and its being offered him to have it only on accepting, supposes that the king looks for no worthiness, nothing in him for which he should bestow pardon as a reward. This may teach us how to understand Acts, xiii. 46. "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we to turn to the Gentiles."

Object. 5. It is objected against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, That repentance is evidently spoken of in Scripture as that which is in a special manner the condition of remission of sins: But remission of sins is by all allowed to be that wherein justification does (at least) in great part consist.

But it must certainly arise from a misunderstanding of what the Scripture says about repentance, to suppose that faith and repentance are two distinct things, that in like manner are the conditions of justification. For it is most plain from the Scripture, that the condition of justification, or that in us by which we are justified, is but one, and that is faith. Faith and repentance are not two distinct conditions of justification, nor are they two distinct things that together make one condition of justification; but faith comprehends the whole of that by which we are justified, or by which we come to have an interest in Christ, and there is nothing else has a parallel concern with it in the affair of our salvation. And this the divines on the other side themselves are sensible of, and therefore they suppose that the faith the apostle Paul speaks of, which he says we are justified by alone, comprehends in it repentance.

And therefore, in answer to the objection, I would say, That when repentance is spoken of in Scripture as the condition of pardon, thereby is not intended any particular grace, or act, properly distinct from faith, that has a parallel influence with it in the affair of our pardon or justification; but by repentance is intended nothing distinct from active conversion, (or conversion actively considered), as it respects the term from which. Active conversion is a motion or exercise of the mind that respects two terms, viz. sin and God: And by repentance is meant this conversion, or active change of the mind, so far as it is conversant about the term from which, or about sin. This is what the word *repentance* properly signifies; which, in the original of the new testament, is μετανοια, and signifies *a change of the mind*, or, which is the same thing, the turning or the conversion of the mind. Repentance is this turning, as it respects what is turned from. Acts, xxvi. 20. "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I shewed unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God." Both these are the same turning, but only with respect to opposite terms: in the former, is expressed the exercise of mind about sin in this turning; in the other, the exercise of mind towards God.

If we look over the Scriptures that speak of evangelical repentance, we shall presently see that repentance is to be understood in this sense; as Matth. ix 13. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke, xiii. 3. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And chap. xv. 7, 10. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," i. e. over one sinner that is converted. Acts, xi. 18. "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." This is said by the Christians of the circumcision at Jerusalem, upon Peter's giving an account of the conversion of Cornelius and his family, and their embracing the gospel, though Peter had said nothing expressly about their sorrow for sin. And again, Acts, xvii. 30. "But now commandeth all men every where to repent." And Luke, xvi. 30. "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they would repent." 2. Pet. iii. 9. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is plain that in these and other places, by repentance is meant conversion.

Now it is true, that conversion is the condition of pardon

and justification: But if it be so, how absurd is it to say, that conversion is one condition of justification, and faith another, as though they were two distributively distinct and parallel conditions? Conversion is the condition of justification, because it is that great change by which we are brought from sin to Christ, and by which we become believers in him: Agreeable to Matt. xxi. 32. "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." When we are directed to repent, that our sins may be blotted out, it is as much as to say, Let your minds and hearts be changed, that your sins may be blotted out. But if it be said, Let your hearts be changed, that you may be justified; and Believe, that you may be justified; does it therefore follow, that the heart being changed is one condition of justification, and believing another? But our minds must be changed, that we may believe, and so may be justified.

And besides, evangelical repentance, being active conversion, is not to be treated of as a particular grace, properly and entirely distinct from faith, as by some it seems to have been. What is conversion, but the sinful, alienated soul's closing with Christ, or the sinner's being brought to believe in Christ? That exercise of soul in conversion that respects sin, cannot be excluded out of the nature of faith in Christ: There is something in faith, or closing with Christ that respects sin, and that is evangelical repentance. That repentance which in Scripture is called, repentance for the remission of sins, is that very principle or operation of the mind itself that is called faith, so far as it is conversant about sin. Justifying faith in a Mediator is conversant about two things: It is conversant about sin or evil to be rejected and to be be delivered from, and about positive good to be accepted and obtained by the Mediator; as conversant about the former of these, it is evangelical repentance, or repentance for remission of sins. Surely they must be very ignorant, or at least very inconsiderate, of the whole tenor of the gospel, who think that the repentance by which remission of sins is obtained, can be completed, as to all that is essential to it, without any respect to Christ, or application of the mind to the Mediator, who alone has made atonement for sin. Surely so great a part of salvation as remission of sins, is not to be obtained without looking or coming to the great and only Saviour. It is true, repentance, in its more general abstracted nature, is only a sorrow for sin, and forsaking of it, which is a duty of natural religion; but evangelical repentance, or repentance for remission of sins, hath more than this essen-

tial to it; a dependence of soul on the Mediator for deliverance from sin, is of the essence of it.

That justifying repentance has the nature of faith, seems evident by Acts, xix. 4. "Then said Paul, John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." The latter words, "saying unto the people, that they should believe on him," &c. are evidently exegetical of the former, and explain how he preached repentance for the remission of sins. When it is said, that he preached repentance for the remission of sin, saying, that they should believe on Christ, it cannot be supposed but that his saying, that they should believe on Christ, was intended as directing them what to do that they might obtain the remission of sins. So, 2 Tim. ii. 25. "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." That acknowledging of the truth which there is in believing, is here spoken of as what is attained in repentance. And on the other hand, that faith includes repentance in its nature, is evident by the apostle's speaking of sin as destroyed in faith, Gal. ii. 18.—In the preceding verses the apostle mentions an objection against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, viz. that it tends to encourage men in sin, and so to make Christ the minister of sin. This objection he rejects and refutes with this, "If I build again the things that I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." If sin be destroyed by faith, it must be by repentance of sin included in it; for we know that it is our repentance of sin, or the μετανοια, or turning of the mind from sin, that is our destroying our sin.

That in justifying faith which directly respects sin, or the evil to be delivered from by the Mediator, is as follows: A sense of our own sinfulness, and the hatefulness of it, and an hearty acknowledgment of its desert of the threatened punishment, looking to the free mercy of God in a Redeemer, for deliverance from it and its punishment.

Concerning this, here described, three things may be noted, 1. That it is the very same with that evangelical repentance to which remission of sins is promised in Scripture. 2. That it is of the essence of justifying faith, and is the same with that faith, so far as it is conversant about evil to be delivered from by the Mediator. 3. That this is indeed the proper and peculiar condition of remission of sins.

1. All of it is essential to evangelical repentance, and is

indeed the very thing meant by that repentance, to which remission of sins is promised in the gospel. As to the former part of the description, viz. a sense of our own sinfulness, and the hatefulness of it, and an hearty acknowledgment of its desert of wrath, none will deny it to be included in repentance: but this does not comprehend the whole essence of evangelical repentance; but what follows does also properly and essentially belong to its nature, looking to the free mercy of God in a Redeemer, for deliverance from it, and the punishment of it. That repentance to which remission is promised, not only always has this with it, but it is contained in it, as what is of the proper nature and essence of it: and respect is ever had to this in the nature of repentance, whenever remission is promised to it; and it is especially from respect to this in the nature of repentance, that it has that promise made to it. If this latter part be missing, it fails of the nature of that evangelical repentance to which remission of sins is promised. If repentance remains in sorrow for sin, and does not reach to a looking to the free mercy of God in Christ for pardon, it is not that which is the condition of pardon, neither shall pardon be obtained by it. Evangelical repentance is an humiliation for sin before God; but the sinner never comes and humbles himself before God in any other repentance, but that which includes hoping in his mercy for remission: If sorrow be not accompanied with that, there will be no coming to God in it, but a flying further from him. There is some worship of God in justifying repentance; but that is not in any other repentance which has not a sense of, and faith in the divine mercy to forgive sin; Psalm cxxx. 4. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." The promise of mercy to a true penitent, in Prov. xxviii. 13. is expressed in these terms, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy." But there is faith in God's mercy in that confessing. The Psalmist, (Psalm xxxii.) speaking of the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven—and whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputes not sin—says, that while he kept silence his bones waxed old; but he acknowledged his sin unto God, his iniquity he did not hide; he said, he would confess his transgression to the Lord, and then God forgave the iniquity of his sin. The manner of expression plainly holds forth, that *then* he began to encourage himself in the mercy of God, but his bones waxed old while he kept silence; and therefore the apostle Paul, in the 4th of Romans, brings this instance, to confirm the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that he

had been insisting on. When sin is aright confessed to God, there is always faith in that act. That confessing of sin which is joined with despair, as in Judas, is not the confession to which the promise is made. In Acts, ii. 38. the direction given to those who were pricked in their heart with a sense of the guilt of sin, was to repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. Being baptised in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, implied faith in Christ for the remission of sins. Repentance for the remission of sins was typified of old by the priest's confessing the sins of the people over the scape-goat, laying his hands on him, Lev. xvi. 21. denoting it is that repentance and confession of sin only that obtains remission, which is made over Christ the great sacrifice, and with dependence on him. Many other things might be produced from the Scripture, that in like manner confirm this point; but these may be sufficient.

2. All the forementioned description is of the essence of justifying faith, and not different from it, so far as it is conversant about sin, or the evil to be delivered from by the Mediator. For it is doubtless of the essence of justifying faith, to embrace Christ as a Saviour from sin and its punishment; and all that is contained in that act is contained in the nature of faith itself. But in the act of embracing Christ as a Saviour from our sin and its punishment, is implied a sense of our sinfulness, and a hatred of our sins, or a rejecting them with abhorrence, and a sense of our desert of punishment. Embracing Christ as a Saviour from sin implies the contrary act, viz. rejecting sin. If we fly to the light to be delivered from darkness, the same act is contrary to darkness, viz. a rejecting of it. In proportion to the earnestness with which we embrace Christ as a Saviour from sin, in the same proportion is the abhorrence with which we reject sin, in the same act. Yea, suppose there be in the nature of faith, as conversant about sin, no more than the hearty embracing of Christ as a Saviour from the punishment of sin, this act will imply in it the whole of the above-mentioned description. It implies a sense of our own sinfulness. Certainly in the hearty embracing of a Saviour from the punishment of our sinfulness, there is the exercise of a sense that we are sinful. We cannot heartily embrace Christ as a Saviour from the punishment of that which we are not sensible we are guilty of. There is also in the same act, a sense of our desert of the threatened punishment. We cannot heartily embrace Christ as a Saviour from that which we are not sensible that we have deserved. For if we are not sensible that we

have deserved the punishment, we shall not be sensible that we have any need of a Saviour from it, or, at least, shall not be convinced but that God who offers the Saviour, unjustly makes him needful; and we cannot heartily embrace such an offer. And further, there is implied in a hearty embracing Christ as a Saviour from punishment, not only a conviction of conscience, that we have deserved the punishment, such as the devils and damned have; but there is a hearty acknowledgment of it, with the submission of the soul, so as, with the accord of the heart, to own that God might be just in the punishment. If the heart rises against the act or judgment of God, in holding us obliged to the punishment, when he offers us his Son as a Saviour from the punishment, we cannot with the consent of the heart receive him in that character: But if persons thus submit to the righteousness of so dreadful a punishment of sin, this carries in it an hatred of sin.

That such a sense of our sinfulness, and utter unworthiness, and desert of punishment, belongs to the nature of saving faith, is what the Scripture from time to time holds forth; as particularly in Matt. xv. 26—28.—"But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the childrens bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters table. Then Jesus answered, and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith."—And Luke, vii. 6—9. "The centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed: for I also am a man set under authority," &c.—"When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And also ver. 37, 38. "And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Together with ver. 50. "He said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

These things do not necessarily suppose that repentance and faith are words of just the same signification; for it is only so much in justifying faith as respects the evil to be delivered

from by the Saviour, that is called repentance. Besides, both repentance and faith, take them only in their general nature, are entirely distinct; repentance is a sorrow for sin, and forsaking of it; and faith is a trusting in God's sufficiency and truth. But faith and repentance, as *evangelical* duties, or justifying faith, and repentance for remission of sins, contain more in them, and imply a respect to a mediator, and involve each other's nature *; though they still bear the name of faith and repentance, from those general moral virtues—that repentance, which is a duty of natural religion, and that faith, which was a duty required under the first covenant—that are contained in this evangelical act; which severally appear, when this act is considered with respect to its different terms and objects.

It may be objected here, that the Scripture sometimes mentions faith and repentance together, as if they were entirely distinct things; as in Mark, i. 15. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." But there is no need of understanding these as two distinct conditions of salvation, but the words are exegetical one of another. It is to teach us after what manner we must repent, viz. as believing the gospel, and after what manner we must believe the gospel, viz. as repenting. These words no more prove faith and repentance to be entirely distinct, than those fore-mentioned. Matth. xxi. 32. "And ye when he had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him." Or those, 2 Tim. ii. 25. If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." The apostle, in Acts, xix. 4. seems to have reference to these words of John the Baptist, "John baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe," &c. where the latter words, as we have already observed, are to explain how he preached repentance.

Another Scripture where faith and repentance are mentioned together, is Acts, xx. 21. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." It may be objected, that in this place, faith and repentance are not only spoken of as distinct things, but having distinct objects.

To this I answer, That faith and repentance, in their general nature, are distinct things: And repentance for the

* Agreeable to this is what Mr. Locke says in his second *Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*, &c. vol. 2. of his works, p. 630, 631. "The believing him there-"fore, to be the Messiah is very often, with great reason, put both for faith and repent-"ance too, which are sometimes set down singly, where one is put for both, implying "the other."

remission of sins, or that in justifying faith that respects the evil to be delivered from, so far as it regards that term, which is what especially denominates it repentance, has respect to God as the object, because he is the Being offended by sin, and to be reconciled, but that in this justifying act, whence it is denominated faith, does more especially respect Christ. But let us interpret it how we will, the objection of faith being here so distinguished from repentance, is as much of an objection against the scheme of those that oppose justification by faith alone, as against this scheme; for they hold that the justifying faith the apostle Paul speaks of, includes repentance, as has been already observed.

3. This repentance that has been described, is indeed the special condition of remission of sins. This seems very evident by the Scripture, as particularly, Mark, i. 4. "John did baptise in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." So, Luke, iii. 3. "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." Luke, xxiv. 47. "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." Acts, v. 31. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Chap. ii. 38. Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And, chap. iii. 19. "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." The like is evident by Lev. xxvi. 40. 41. 42. Job, xxxiii. 27. 28. Psalm, xxxii. 5. Prov. xxviii. 13. Jer. iii. 13. And 1 John, i. 9. and other places.

And the reason may be plain from what has been said. We need not wonder that what in faith especially respects sin, should be especially the condition of remission of sins; or that this motion or exercise of the soul, as it rejects and flies from evil, and embraces Christ as a Saviour from it, should especially be the condition of being free from that evil; in like manner, as the same principle or motion, as it seeks good, and cleaves to Christ as the procurer of that good, should be the condition of obtaining that good. Faith with respect to good is accepting, and with respect to evil it is rejecting. Yea this rejecting evil is itself an act of acceptance; it is accepting freedom or separation from that evil; and this freedom or separation is the benefit bestowed in remission. No wonder that what in faith immediately respects this benefit, and is our acceptance of it, should be the special condition of our having it. It is so with respect to all the benefits that Christ

has purchased. Trusting in God through Christ for such a particular benefit that we need, is the special condition of obtaining that benefit. When we need protection from enemies, the exercise of faith with respect to such a benefit, or trusting in Christ for protection from enemies, is especially the way to obtain that particular benefit, rather than trusting in Christ for something else; and so of any other benefit that might be mentioned. So prayer (which is the expression of faith) for a particular mercy needed, is especially the way to obtain that mercy*.—So that no argument can be drawn from hence against the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And there is that in the nature of repentance, which peculiarly tends to establish the contrary of justification by works: for nothing so much renounces our own worthiness and excellency, as repentance; the very nature of it is to acknowledge our own utter sinfulness and unworthiness, and to renounce our own goodness, and all confidence in self; and so to trust in the propitiation of the Mediator, and ascribe all the glory of forgiveness to him.

Object. 6. The last objection I shall mention, is that paragraph in the 3d chapter of James, where persons are said expressly to be justified by works; verse, 21. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" verse, 24. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only;" verse 25. Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?"

In answer to this objection, I would

1. Take notice of the great unfairness of the divines that oppose us, in the improvement they make of this passage against us. All will allow, that in that proposition of St James, "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only," one of the terms, either the word *faith*, or else the word *justify*, is not to be understood precisely in the same sense as the same terms when used by St. Paul; because they suppose, as well as we, that it was not the intent of the apostle James to contradict St. Paul in that doctrine of justification by faith alone, in which he had instructed the churches. But if we understand both the terms, as used by each apostle, in precisely the same sense, then what one asserts is a precise, direct, and full contradiction of the other, the one affirming and the other deny-

* If repentance justifies, or be that by which we obtain pardon of sin any other way than this, it must be either as a virtue or righteousness, or something amiable in us; or else it must be, that our sorrow and condemning what is past, is accepted as some atonement for it; both which are equally contrary to the gospel-doctrine of justification by Christ.

ing the very same thing. So that all the controversy from this text comes to this, viz. which of these two terms shall be understood in a diversity from St. Paul. They say that it is the word *faith*; for they suppose, that when the apostle Paul uses the word, and makes faith that by which alone we are justified, that then by it is understood a compliance with, and practice of Christianity in general; so as to include all saving Christian virtue and obedience. But as the apostle James uses the word faith in this place, they suppose thereby is to be understood only an assent of the understanding to the truth of gospel doctrines, as distinguished from good works, and that may exist separate from them, and from all saving grace. We, on the other hand, suppose that the word *justify* is to be understood in a different sense from the apostle Paul. So that they are forced to go as far in their scheme, in altering the sense of terms from Paul's use of them, as we. But yet at the same time that they freely vary the sense of the former of them, viz. faith, yet when we understand the latter, viz. justify, in a different sense from St. Paul, they exclaim against us. What necessity of framing this distinction, but only to serve an opinion? At this rate a man may maintain any thing, though never so contrary to Scripture, and elude the clearest text in the Bible! though they do not shew us why we have not as good warrant to understand the word *justify* in a diversity from St. Paul, as they the word *faith*. If the sense of one of the words must be varied on either scheme, to make the apostle James's doctrine consistent with the apostle Paul's; and if varying the sense of one term or the other be all that stands in the way of their agreeing with either scheme; and if varying the sense of the latter be in itself as fair as of the former, then the text lies as fair for one scheme as the other, and can no more fairly be an objection against our scheme than theirs. And if so, what becomes of all this great objection from this passage in James?

2. If there be no more difficulty in varying the sense of one of these terms than another, from any thing in the text itself, so as to make the words suit with either scheme, then certainly that is to be chosen that is most agreeable to the current of Scripture, and other places where the same matter is more particularly and fully treated of; and therefore that we should understand the word *justify* in this passage of James, in a sense in some respect diverse from that in which St. Paul uses it. For by what has been already said, it may appear, that there is no one doctrine in the whole Bible more fully as-

serted, explained, and urged, than the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any of our own righteousness.

3. There is a very fair interpretation of this passage of St. James, no way inconsistent with this doctrine of justification, which I have shown that other Scriptures abundantly teach, which the words themselves will as well allow of, as that which the objectors put upon them, and much better agrees with the context; and that is, that works are here spoken of as justifying as evidences. A man may be said to be justified by that which clears him, or vindicates him, or makes the goodness of his cause manifest. When a person has a cause tried in a civil court, and is justified or cleared, he may be said in different senses to be justified or cleared, by the goodness of his cause, and by the goodness of the evidences of it. He may be said to be cleared by what evidences his cause to be good; but not in the same sense as he is by that which makes his cause to be good. That which renders his cause good, is the proper ground of his justification; it is by that that he is himself a proper subject of it; but evidences justify, only as they manifest that his cause is good in fact, whether they are of such a nature as to have any influence to render it so or no. It is by works that our cause appears to be good; but by faith our cause not only appears to be good, but becomes good; because thereby we are united to Christ. That the word *justify* should be sometimes understood to signify the former of these, as well as the latter, is agreeable to the use of the word in common speech; as we say such an one stood up to justify another, i. e. he endeavoured to shew or manifest his cause to be good.—And it is certain that the word is sometimes used in this sense in Scripture, when speaking of our being justified before God; as where it is said, we shall be justified by our words, Matt. xii. 37. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." It cannot be meant that men are accepted before God on the account of their words; for God has told us nothing more plainly, than that it is the heart that he looks at; and that when he acts as judge towards men, in order to justifying or condemning, he tries the heart, Jer. xi. 20. "But, O Lord of hosts, that judgeth righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause." Psalm vii. 8. 9. "The Lord shall judge the people: judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just; for the righteous God trieth the

hearts and reins." Ver. 11. "God judgeth the righteous." And many other places to the like purpose. And therefore men can be justified by their words, no otherwise than as evidences or manifestations of what is in the heart. And it is thus that Christ speaks of words in this very place, as is evident by the context, ver. 34, 35. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart," &c. The words, or sounds themselves, are neither parts of godliness, nor evidences of godliness, but as signs of what is inward.

God himself, when he acts towards men as judge, in order to a declarative judgment, makes use of evidences, and so judges men by their works. And therefore, at the day of judgment, God will judge men according to their works: For though God will stand in no need of evidence to inform him what is right, yet it is to be considered, that he will then sit in judgment, not as earthly judges do, to find out what is right in a cause, but to declare and manifest what is right: and therefore that day is called by the apostle, "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. ii. 5.

To be justified, is to be approved of and accepted: But a man may be said to be approved and accepted in two respects; the one is to be approved really, and the other to be approved and accepted declaratively. Justification is twofold; it is either the acceptance and approbation of the judge itself, or the manifestation of that approbation, by a sentence or judgment declared by the judge, either to our own consciences, or to the world. If Justification be understood in the former sense, for the approbation itself, that is only that by which we become fit to be approved: But if it be understood in the latter sense, for the manifestation of this approbation, it is by whatever is a proper evidence of that fitness. In the former, only faith is concerned; because it is by that only in us that we become fit to be accepted and approved: In the latter, whatever is an evidence of our fitness, is alike concerned. And therefore, take justification in this sense, and then faith, and all other graces and good works, have a common and equal concern in it: For any other grace, or holy act, is equally an evidence of a qualification for acceptance or approbation, as faith.

To justify has always, in common speech, signified indifferently, either simply approbation, or testifying that approbation; sometimes one, and sometimes the other; because they are both the same, only as one is outwardly what the other is inwardly. So we, and it may be all nations, are wont to give

the same names to two things, when one is only declarative of the other. Thus sometimes judging, intends only judging in our thoughts ; at other times, testifying and declaring judgement. So such words as justify, condemn, accept, reject, prize, slight, approve, renounce, are sometimes put for mental acts, at other times, for an outward treatment. So in the sense in which the apostle James seems to use the word *justify*, for *manifestative justification*, a man is justified not only by *faith*, but also by *works* ; as a tree is manifested to be good, not only by immediately examining the tree, but also by the fruit,* Prov. xx. 11.

* This distinction is just and scriptural as far as it goes, but it does not reach the bottom of the difficulty, since *believing* in order to justification is itself a part of *obedience*, and is expressly called "the obedience of faith." Hence justification by faith, in comparison of what precedes it, is only *manifestative*. The *tree* must be good, that is, the *person* must be vitally united to Christ, as the adequate cause of believing otherwise he would be still carnal. The faith of a man spiritually dead or carnal, must needs be a *dead faith* ; but to suppose that *such* faith unites to Christ, has neither scripture nor any plausible reason to support it.

To him that is *in Christ Jesus* by a vital union, there is no condemnation ; and as there is no medium between condemnation and justification, he who is *in Christ* is justified, or "accepted in the beloved" Saviour. That union which Christ effects by his quickening spirit, makes the *tree good*, and believing with the heart, in order to receive the promised righteousness is the *fruit* of a good tree. Therefore the justification which is received as the *consequence* of believing is only *manifestative* of *union* ; even as justification by works ; as asserted by St. James, is *manifestative* of a living *faith*. As without *works* there is no sufficient evidence of union to Christ on *our part*, so without *faith* in Christ as our complete righteousness, there is no sufficient evidence of union with him on *his part*.

The true Christian's works, are "works of faith and labours of love," performed in obedience to God's authority, directed to his glory, and inspired by gratitude for the blessings of his grace, and this is the *first* of all such works, called "the work of God," even to *believe* on Jesus Christ in whom alone is righteousness and life. By believing we receive the divine testimony respecting a *gratuitous* righteousness, and renounce all hope of obtaining justification by any other way.

The justifying *righteousness* is only *one*, but the appointed ways of becoming *interested* in it are divers. One way is by the will of *God* our Saviour, the other by the will of *man* the accountable agent, each in its own order. The will of God gives the *fundamental* interest, and the will of man the *consequent*, and manifestative interest. In the first way, we are interested in Christ's righteousness by *one act continued*, commencing with, and permanent as the primary vital union ; in the other way, it is by *repeated acts*, commencing with the first act of faith in Christ, and repeated with every succeeding reception of him.

Among persons who have made any, even the smallest progress in Christian knowledge, there can be no dispute respecting the *fundamental cause* of justification. All such acknowledge, that the righteousness, or *federal perfection* of Jesus Christ is that for the sake of which any of the fallen race of Adam can be justified. The difference of sentiment arises from the *appointed method* of obtaining an interest in this meritorious cause. For want of consideration, we too hastily infer, that if the scripture states *one* appointed method, that it must be an *exclusive* appointment.—Hence one pleads from scripture, and especially St. James's epistle, that this appointed method is by *works*, that is, evangelical obedience, of which faith is a leading part. Another pleads from scripture, that it is by *faith*, not as an act of moral obedience, but as a suitable bond of union, to the exclusion of all works, And a third, from the same scripture, pleads, that we are justified by an eternal immanent act of God, and that faith only brings us to *enjoy* a privilege which belongs to the elect from eternity.

Now each of these schemes overlooks the important truth, that the immediate

Even a child is known by his doing, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."

The drift of the apostle does not require that he should be understood in any other sense: For all that he aims at, as appears by a view of the context, is to prove that good works are

ground of justification is the *vital union* between Christ and the soul. Justification from eternity *precedes* vital union; justification by works *denies* the fact of a vital union being an adequate ground of a justifying sentence; and justification by faith alone, or believing in Christ, to the exclusion of a *prior* vital union on the part of the spirit, *confounds* the work of man and the work of God. This last being the most difficult part of the subject, I beg leave to make a few observations upon it.

1. The *claims* of God, in reference to justification, are *two-fold*. In the first instance, he claims from man a *federal perfection*; and in the second instance, he claims *compliance* with his method of bestowing an interest in it. The former claim may be answered by the *surety*, and in fact is answered by *his act* of a vital union on his part. For by this he gives an *interest* in himself to the soul he savingly adopts. Thus there is no condemnation to you that are *in Christ Jesus*. But the latter claim can be answered only by the *believer* himself, when he actually receives Christ as his righteousness, and so answers the divine requisition. Thus, he that *believeth* in Christ is justified from all things. In the first instance, *Christ* pleads his own righteousness in behalf of the adopted sinner; in the last instance, the *believer* pleads the *same* righteousness in his own behalf.

2. The *obligations* of man, in reference to justification, are also of two kinds. In the first place, he stands obliged to be conformed to the law as a *covenant*, which demands a sinless perfection; and, in the second place, he is obliged to conform to the law as a *rule*. Now whatever God enjoins as a duty, is a part of this rule; whether it be to hate sin, to love God, to believe in Christ, or to observe whatever Christ hath commanded. Our obligation to be conformed to the law as a covenant, is discharged by *Christ only* as our surety; and our ability to discharge our obligation of being conformed to the law as a rule is from him. We are obliged to believe on him as our justifying righteousness, under pain of God's displeasure, but man will ever continue in unbelief until Christ slays his enmity, and enables him to believe. But to slay a sinner's enmity, to change his nature, or to give him ability to believe is the effect of a vital union; for as there is no such ability without gracious influence, so there is no gracious influence without union to the source of spiritual life. When thus enabled, man exercises repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Receiving him by *faith* alone, as our righteousness and life, the law is obeyed as the voice of God, requiring the *obedience* of faith.

3. The method of *mercy*, in reference to justification, includes the substitution of the Saviour, and our acceptance in him, without *any works* of righteousness on our part. In this respect, not by works of righteousness which we have done, whether faith, repentance, or any kind of obedience, but according to his mercy he saveth us—provides a Saviour and gives us a saving interest in him. Grace *provides*, and grace *applies* the remedy. Mercy imputes to Jesus our sins, and imputes to us his righteousness. He who knew no sin was by sovereign mercy made a sin offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Mercy laid the foundation, and placed us on it, that we might become living stones on him; and in consequence find him to be precious.

4. The rule of *moral government*, in reference to justification, is, that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the end of the law for righteousness. For this end is the gospel proclaimed to all nations, even for "the obedience of faith." This is the language of divine government, "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." The unbeliever is condemned already, because he rejects the counsel of God, and neglects so great salvation. Mercy hath *provided* an adequate and all sufficient remedy, and government requires our closing with it as the only ground of hope left us. An endeavour to set up our own obedience instead of the righteousness of Christ is rebellion against the authority of God, and undervaluing his wisdom and grace. None deserve condemnation more than those who reject the only remedy. And even they who believe have no ground of boasting. For we are saved by grace, and justified by faith, and that is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God.—The influence of works in justification our author has well explained. W.

necessary. The error of those that he opposed was this, That good works were not necessary to salvation; that if they did but believe that there was but one God, and that Christ was the Son of God, and the like, and were baptised, they were safe, let them live how they would; which doctrine greatly tended to licentiousness. The evincing the contrary of this is evidently the apostle's scope.

And that we should understand the apostle, of works justifying as an *evidence*, and in a declarative judgment, is what a due consideration of the context will naturally lead us to.—For it is plain, that the apostle is here insisting on works, in the quality of a necessary manifestation and evidence of faith, or as what the truth of faith is made to appear by: As ver. 18. "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." And when he says, ver. 26. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." It is much more rational and natural to understand him as speaking of works, as the proper signs and evidences of the reality, life, and goodness of faith. Not that the very works or actions done are properly the life of faith, as the spirit in the body; but it is the active, working nature of faith, of which the actions or works done are the signs, that is itself the life and spirit of faith. The sign of a thing is often in Scripture language said to be that thing; as it is in that comparison by which the apostle illustrates it. Not the actions themselves of a body, are properly the life or spirit of the body; but the active nature, of which those actions or motions are the signs, is the life of the body. That which makes men pronounce any thing to be alive, is, that they observe it has an active operative nature; which they observe no otherwise than by the actions or motions which are the signs of it. It is plainly the apostle's aim to prove, that if faith hath not works, it is a sign that it is not a good sort of faith; which would not have been to his purpose, if it was his design to shew that it is not by faith alone, though of a right sort, that we have acceptance with God, but that we are accepted on the account of obedience as well as faith. It is evident, by the apostle's reasoning, that the necessity of works, is not from their having a parallel concern in our salvation with faith; but he speaks of works only as related to faith, and expressive of it; which, after all, leaves faith the alone fundamental condition, without any thing else having a parallel concern with it in this affair;

and other things conditions, only as several expressions and evidences of it.

That the apostle speaks of works justifying only as a sign, or evidence, and in God's declarative judgment, is further confirmed by verse 21. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?" Here the apostle seems plainly to refer to that declarative judgment of God, concerning Abraham's sincerity, manifested to him, for the peace and assurance of his own conscience, after his offering up Isaac his son on the altar, Gen. xxii. 12. "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." But here it is plain, and expressed in the very words of justification or approbation, that this work of Abraham offering up his son on the altar, justified him as an *evidence*. When the apostle James says, we are justified by works, he may, and ought to be understood in a sense agreeable to the instance he brings for the proof of it: But justification in that instance appears by the words of justification themselves, to be by works as an evidence. And where this instance of Abraham's obedience is elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament, it is mentioned as a fruit and evidence of his faith. Heb. xi. 17. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son."

And in the other instance which the apostle mentions, verse 25. "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" The apostle refers to a declarative judgment, in that particular testimony which was given of God's approbation of her as a believer, in directing Joshua to save her when the rest of Jericho was destroyed, Josh. vi. 25. "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." This was accepted as an evidence and expression of her faith. Heb. xi. 31. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." The apostle in saying, "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?" by the manner of his speaking has reference to something in her history; but we have no account in her history of any other justification of her but this.

4. If, notwithstanding, any choose to take justification in St. James's, precisely as we do in Paul's epistles, for God's

acceptance or approbation itself, and not any expression of that approbation; what has been already said concerning the manner in which acts of evangelical obedience are concerned in the affair of our justification, affords a very easy, clear, and full answer. For if we take works as acts or expressions of faith, they are not excluded; so a man is not justified by faith only, but also by works; i. e. he is not justified only by faith as a principle in the heart, or in its first and more immanent acts, but also by the effective acts of it in life, which are the expressions of the life of faith, as the operations and actions of the body are of the life of that; agreeable to verse 26.

What has been said in answer to these objections, may also, I hope, abundantly serve for an answer to another objection, often made against this doctrine, viz. that it encourages licentiousness in life. For, from what has been said, we may see that the scripture doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any manner of goodness or excellency of ours, does in no wise diminish either the necessity or benefit of a sincere evangelical universal *obedience*. Man's salvation is not only indissolubly connected with obedience, and damnation with the want of it, in those who have opportunity for it, but depends upon it in many respects. It is the way to salvation, and the necessary preparation for it; eternal blessings are bestowed in reward for it, and our justification in our own consciences and at the day of judgment, depends on it, as the proper evidence of our acceptable state; and that, even in accepting of us as intitled to life in our justification, God has respect to this, as that on which the fitness of such an act of justification depends: so that our *salvation* does as truly depend upon it, as if we were justified for the moral excellency of it. And besides all this, the degree of our happiness to all eternity is suspended on, and determined by the degree of this. So that this gospel scheme of justification is as far from encouraging licentiousness, and contains as much to encourage and excite to strict and universal obedience, and the utmost possibly eminency of holiness, as any scheme that can be devised, and indeed unspeakably more.

I come now to the

V. And last thing proposed, which is, to consider the "importance of this doctrine."

I know there are many who make as though this controversy was of no great importance; that it is chiefly a matter of nice speculation, depending on certain subtile distinctions,

which many that make use of them do not understand themselves; and that the difference is not of such consequence as to be worth being zealous about; and that more hurt is done by raising disputes about it than good.

Indeed I am far from thinking that it is of absolute necessity persons should understand, and be agreed upon, all the distinctions needful particularly to explain and defend this doctrine against all cavils and objections. Yet all Christians should strive after an increase of knowledge; and none should content themselves without some clear and distinct understanding in this point. But we should believe in the general, according to the clear and abundant revelations of God's word, that it is none of our own excellency, virtue, or righteousness, that is the *ground* of our being received from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance in God's sight, but only Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, and worthiness, received by faith. This I think to be of great importance, at least in application to ourselves; and that for the following reasons.

1. The scripture treats of this doctrine, as a doctrine of very great importance. That there is a certain doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to justification by the works of the law, which the apostle Paul insists upon as of the greatest importance, none will deny; because there is nothing in the Bible more apparent. The apostle, under the infallible conduct of the Spirit of God, thought it worth his most strenuous and zealous disputing about and defending. He speaks of the contrary doctrine as fatal and ruinous to the souls of men, in the latter end of the 9th chapter of Romans, and beginning of the 10th. He speaks of it as subversive of the gospel of Christ, and calls it another gospel, and says concerning it, if any one, "though an angel from heaven, preach it, let him be accursed;" Gal. i. 6—9. compared with the following part of the espistle. Certainly we must allow the apostles to be good judges of the importance and tendency of doctrines; at least the Holy Ghost in them. And doubtless we are safe, and in no danger of harshness and censoriousness, if we only follow him, and keep close to his express teachings, in what we believe and say of the hurtful and pernicious tendency of any error. Why are we to blame, for saying what the Bible has taught us to say, or for believing what the Holy Ghost has taught us to that end that we might believe it?

2. The adverse scheme lays another foundation of man's salvation than God hath laid. I do not now speak of that ineffectual redemption that they suppose to be universal, and

what all mankind are equally the subjects of; but, I say, it lays entirely another foundation of man's actual, discriminating salvation, or that salvation wherein true Christians differ from wicked men. We suppose the foundation of this to be Christ's worthiness and righteousness: on the contrary, that scheme supposes it to be men's own virtue; even so, that this is the ground of a saving interest in Christ itself. It takes away Christ out of the place of the bottom stone, and puts in men's own virtue in the room of him: So that Christ himself in the affair of distinguishing actual salvation, is laid upon this foundation. And the foundation being so different, I leave it to every one to judge whether the difference between the two schemes consists only in punctilios of small consequence. The foundations being contrary, makes the whole scheme exceeding diverse and opposite; the one is a gospel scheme, the other a legal one.

3. It is in this doctrine that the most essential difference lies between the covenant of grace and the first covenant. The adverse scheme of justification supposes that we are justified by our *works*, in the very same sense wherein man was to have been justified by his works under the first covenant. By that covenant our first parents were not to have had eternal life given them for any proper merit in their obedience; because their perfect obedience was a debt that they owed God. Nor was it to be bestowed for any proportion between the dignity of their obedience, and the value of the reward; but only it was to be bestowed from a regard to a moral fitness in the virtue of their obedience, to the reward of God's favour; and a title to eternal life was to be given them, as a testimony of God's pleasedness with their works, or his regard to the inherent beauty of their virtue. And so it is the very same way that those in the adverse scheme suppose that we are received into God's special favour now, and to those saving benefits that are the testimonies of it. I am sensible the divines of that side entirely disclaim the Popish doctrine of *merit;* and are free to speak of our utter unworthiness, and the great imperfection of all our services. But after all, it is our *virtue*, imperfect as it is, that recommends men to God, by which good men come to have a saving interest in Christ, and God's favour, rather than others; and these things are bestowed in testimony of God's respect to their goodness. So that whether they will allow the term *merit* or no, yet they hold, that we are accepted by our own merit, in the same sense, though not in the same degree, as under the first covenant.

But the great and most distinguishing difference between that covenant and the covenant of grace is, that by the covenant of grace we are not thus justified by our own works, but only by faith in Jesus Christ. It is on this account chiefly that the new covenant deserves the name of a Covenant of Grace, as is evident by Rom. iv. 16. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." And chap. iii. 20. 24. "Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight;"——"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And chap. xi. 6. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: But if it be of works; then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Gal. v. 4. "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." And therefore the apostle, in the same epistle to the Galatians, speaking of the doctrine of justification by works as another gospel, adds, "which is not another," chap. i. vers. 6. 7. It is no gospel at all; it is law. It is no covenant of grace, but of works; not an evangelical, but a legal doctrine. Certainly that doctrine wherein consists the greatest and most essential difference between the covenant of grace and the first covenant, must be a doctrine of great importance. That doctrine of the gospel by which above all others it is worthy of the name of gospel, is doubtless a very important doctrine of the gospel.

4. This is the main thing for which fallen men stood in need of divine revelation, to teach us how we who have sinned may come to be again accepted of God; or, which is the same thing, how the sinner may be justified. Something beyond the light of nature is necessary to salvation chiefly on this account. Mere natural reason afforded no means by which we could come to the knowledge of this, it depending on the sovereign pleasure of the Being that we had offended by sin. This seems to be the great drift of that revelation which God has given, and of all those mysteries it reveals, all those great doctrines that are peculiarly doctrines of revelation, and above the light of nature. It seems to have been very much on this account, that it was requisite the doctrine of the Trinity itself should be revealed to us; that by a discovery of the concern of the several divine persons in the great affair of our salvation we might the better understand and see how all our dependence in this affair is on God, and our sufficiency all in him, and not in ourselves; that he is all in all in this business, agreeable to 1 Cor. i. 20—31.: "That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." What is the gospel, but only the glad tidings of a new way of acceptance with God unto life, a way wherein sinners may come to be free from the guilt of sin, and obtain a title to eternal life? And if, when this way is revealed, it is rejected, and another of man's devising be put in the room of it, without doubt, it must be an error of great importance, and the apostle might well say it was another gospel.

5. The contrary scheme of justification derogates much from the honour of God and the Mediator. I have already shewn how it diminishes the glory of the Mediator, in ascribing that to man's virtue and goodness, which belongs alone to his worthiness and righteousness. By the apostle's sense of the matter it renders Christ needless. Gal. v. 4. "Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." If that scheme of justification be followed in its consequences, it utterly overthrows the glory of all the great things that have been contrived, and done, and suffered in the work of redemption. Gal. ii. 21. "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." It has also been already shewn how it diminishes the glory of divine grace, (which is the attribute God hath especially set himself to glorify in the work of redemption); and so that it greatly diminishes the obligation to gratitude in the sinner that is saved. Yea, in the sense of the apostle, it makes void the distinguishing grace of the gospel. Gal. v. 4. "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, are fallen from grace." It diminishes the glory of the grace of God and the Redeemer, and proportionably magnifies man. It makes the goodness and excellency of fallen man to be something, which I have shewn are nothing. I have also already shewn, that it is contrary to the truth of God in the threatening of his holy law, to justify the sinner for his virtue. And whether it were contrary to God's truth or no, it is a scheme of things very unworthy of God. It supposes that God, when about to lift up a poor forlorn malefactor condemned to eternal misery for sinning against his Majesty, and to make him unspeakably and eternally happy by bestowing his Son and himself upon him, as it were, sets all this to sale, for the price of his virtue and excellency. I know that those whom we oppose acknowledge, that the price is very disproportionate to the benefit bestowed; and say, that God's grace is wonderfully manifested in accepting so little virtue, and bestowing so glorious a reward for such imperfect righteousness. But see-

ing we are such infinitely sinful and abominable creatures in God's sight, and by our infinite guilt have brought ourselves into such wretched and deplorable circumstances—and all our righteousnesses are nothing, and ten thousand times worse than nothing, if God looks upon them as they are in themselves—is it not immensely more worthy of the infinite majesty and glory of God, to deliver and make happy such wretched vagabonds and captives, without any money or price of theirs, or any manner of expectation of excellency or virtue in them, in any wise to recommend them? Will it not betray a foolish exalting opinion of ourselves, and a mean one of God, to have a thought of offering any thing of ours, to recommend us to the favour of being brought from wallowing, like filthy swine, in the mire of our sins, and from the enmity and misery of devils in the lowest hell, to the state of God's dear children, in the everlasting arms of his love in heavenly glory; or to imagine that it is the constitution of God, that we should bring our filthy rags, and offer them to him as the *price* of this?

6. The opposite scheme does most directly tend to lead men to trust in their own righteousness for justification, which is a thing fatal to the soul. This is what men are of themselves exceeding prone to do, (and that though they are never so much taught the contrary), through the partial and high thoughts they have of themselves, and their exceeding dulness of apprehending any such mystery as our being accepted for the righteousness of another. But this scheme directly teaches men to trust in their own righteousness for justification; in that it teaches them that this is indeed what they must be justified by, being the way of justification which God himself has appointed. So that if a man had naturally no disposition to trust in his own righteousness, yet if he embraced this scheme, and acted consistently, it would lead him to it. But that trusting in our own righteousness, is a thing fatal to the soul, is what the scripture plainly teaches us. It tells us, that it will cause that Christ shall profit us nothing, and be of no effect to us, Gal. v. 2—4. For though the apostle speaks there particularly of circumcision, yet it is not merely being circumcised, but trusting in circumcision as a righteousness, that the apostle has respect to. He could not mean, that merely being circumcised would render Christ of no profit or effect to a person; for we read that he himself, for certain reasons, took Timothy and circumcised him, Acts, xvi. 3. And the same is evident by the context, and by the rest of the

epistle. And the apostle speaks of trusting in their own righteousness as fatal to the Jews, Rom. ix. 31, 32. "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Together with chap. x. vers. 3. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." And this is spoken of as fatal to the Pharisees, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, which Christ spake to them in order to reprove them for trusting in themselves that they were righteous. The design of the parable is to shew them, that the very Publicans shall be justified, rather than they; as appears by the reflection Christ makes upon it, Luke xviii. 14. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;" that is, this and not the other. The fatal tendency of it might also be proved from its inconsistence with the nature of justifying faith, and with the nature of that humiliation that the scripture often speaks of as absolutely necessary to salvation; but these scriptures are so express, that it is needless to bring any further arguments.

How far a wonderful and mysterious agency of God's Spirit may so influence some men's hearts, that their practice in this regard may be contrary to their own principles, so that they shall not trust in their own righteousness, though they profess that men are justified by their own righteousness—or how far they may believe the doctrine of justification by men's own righteousness in general, and yet not believe it in a particular application of it to themselves—or how far that error which they may have been led into by education, or cunning sophistry of others, may yet be indeed contrary to the prevailing disposition of their hearts, and contrary to their practice.—Or how far some may seem to maintain a doctrine contrary to this gospel-doctrine of justification, that really do not, but only express themselves differently from others; or seem to oppose it through their misunderstanding of our expressions, or we of theirs, when indeed our real sentiments are the same in the main—or may seem to differ more than they do, by using terms that are without a precisely fixed and determinate meaning—or to be wide in their sentiments from this doctrine, for want of a distinct understanding of it; whose hearts, at

the same time, entirely agree with it, and if once it was clearly explained to their understandings, would immediately close with it, and embrace it: How far these things may be, I will not determine; but am fully persuaded that great allowances are to be made on these and such like accounts, in innumerable instances; though it is manifest, from what has been said, that the teaching and propagating contrary doctrines and schemes, is of a pernicious and fatal tendency.

DISCOURSE II.

PRESSING INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

LUKE xvi. 16.

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

IN these words two things may be observed; *First*, Wherein the work and office of John the Baptist consisted, viz. in preaching the kingdom of God, to prepare the way for its introduction to succeed the law and the prophets. By the law and the prophets, in the text, seems to be intended the ancient dispensation under the Old Testament, which was received from Moses and the prophets. These are said to be *until John*; not that the revelations given by them are out of use since that time, but that the state of the church, founded and regulated under God by them, the dispensation of which they were the ministers, and wherein the church depended mainly on light received from them, fully continued till John. He first began to introduce the New-Testament dispensation, or gospel-state of the church; which, with its glorious, spiritual, and eternal privileges and blessings, is often called the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God. John the Baptist preached, that the kingdom of God was at hand. "Repent," says he, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:"—"Since that time," says Christ, "the kingdom of God is preached." John the Baptist first began to preach it; and then, after him, Christ and his disciples preached the same. Thus Christ preached, Matth. iv. 17. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and

to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So the disciples were directed to preach, Matth. x. 7. "And, as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was not John the Baptist, but Christ, that fully brought in, and actually established this kingdom of God; but he, as Christ's fore-runner to prepare his way before him, did the first thing that was done towards introducing it. The old dispensation was abolished, and the new brought in by degrees; as the night gradually ceases, and gives place to the increasing day which succeeds in its room. First the day-star rises; next follows the light of the sun itself, but dimly reflected, in the dawning of the day; but this light increases, and shines more and more, and the stars that served for light during the foregoing night, gradually go out, and their light ceases, as being now needless, till at length the sun rises, and enlightens the world by his own direct light, which increases as he ascends higher above the horizon, till the day star itself gradually disappears; agreeable to what John says of himself, John, iii. 30. "He must increase, but I must decrease." John was the forerunner of Christ, and harbinger of the gospel-day; much as the morning-star is the forerunner of the sun. He had the most honourable office of any of the prophets; the other prophets foretold Christ to come, he revealed him as already come, and had the honour to be that servant who should come immediately before him, and actually introduce him, and even to be the instrument concerned in his solemn inauguration, as he was in baptising him. He was the greatest of the prophets that came before Christ, as the morning-star is the brightest of all the stars, Matth. xi. 11. He came to prepare men's hearts to receive that kingdom of God which Christ was about more fully to reveal and erect. Luke i. 17. "To make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Secondly, We may observe wherein his success appeared, viz. in that since he began his ministry, every man pressed into that kingdom of God which he preached. The greatness of his success appeared in two things:

1. In the generalness of it, with regard to the subject, or the persons in whom the success appeared; *every man*. Here is a term of universality; but it is not to be taken as universal with regard to individuals, but kinds; as such universal terms are often used in Scripture. When John preached, there was an extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God that attended his preaching. An uncommon awakening, and concern for salvation, appeared on the minds of all sorts of persons; and

even in the most unlikely persons, and those from whom such a thing might least be expected; as the Pharisees, who were exceeding proud, and self-sufficient, and conceited of their own wisdom and righteousness, and looked on themselves fit to be teachers of others, and used to scorn to be taught; and the Sadducees, who were a kind of infidels, that denied any resurrection, angel, or spirit, or any future state. So that John himself seems to be surprised to see them come to him, under such concern for their salvation; as in Matth. iii. 7. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And besides these, the publicans, who were some of the most infamous sort of men, came to him, inquiring what they should do to be saved. And the soldiers, who were doubtless a very profane, loose, and profligate sort of persons, made the same inquiry, Luke iii. 12. and 14. "Then came also publicans to be baptised, and said unto him, Master what shall we do? And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?

2. His success appeared in the manner in which his hearers sought the kingdom of God; they pressed into it. It is elsewhere set forth by their being violent for the kingdom of heaven, and taking it by force. Matth. xi. 12. "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."

The DOCTRINE that I observe from the words is this.—"It concerns every one that would obtain the kingdom of God, to be pressing into it."—In discoursing on this subject, I would,

First, Shew *what* is that way of seeking salvation that seems to be pointed forth in the expression of *pressing into the kingdom of God.*

Secondly, Give the reasons *why* it concerns every one that would obtain the kingdom of God, to seek it in this way.—And then make application.

I. I would shew what manner of seeking salvation seems to be denoted by "pressing into the kingdom of God"

1. This expression denotes *strength of desire.* Men in general who live under the light of the gospel, and are not Atheists, desire the kingdom of God; that is, they desire to go

to heaven rather than to hell. Most of them indeed are not much concerned about it; but on the contrary, live a secure and careless life. And some who are many degrees above these, being under some degrees of the awakenings of God's Spirit, yet are not pressing into the kingdom of God. But they that may be said to be truly so, have strong desires to get out of a natural condition, and to get an interest in Christ. They have such a conviction of the misery of their present state, and of the extreme necessity of obtaining a better, that their minds are as it were possessed with, and wrapped up in concern about it. To obtain salvation is desired by them above all things in the world; This concern is so great that it very much shuts out other concerns. They used before to have the stream of their desires after other things, or, it may be, had their concern divided between this and them; but when they come to answer the expression in the text, of *pressing into the kingdom of God*, this concern prevails above all others; it lays other things low, and does in a manner engross the care of the mind. This seeking eternal life should not only be one concern that our souls are taken up about with other things; but salvation should be sought as the one thing needful, Luke x. 42. And as the one thing that is desired, Psalm xxvii. 4.

2. Pressing into the kingdom of heaven, denotes earnestness and *firmness of resolution*. There should be strength of resolution accompanying strength of desire, as it was in the Psalmist, in the place just now referred to; "one thing have I desired, and that will I seek after." In order to a thorough engagedness of the mind in this affair, both these must meet together. Besides desires after salvation, there should be an earnest resolution in persons to pursue this good as much as lies in their power; to do all that in the use of their utmost strength they are able to do, in an attendance on every duty, and resisting and militating against all manner of sin, and to continue in such a pursuit.

There are two things needful in a person, in order to these strong resolutions; there must be a sense of the great importance and necessity of the mercy sought, and there must also be a sense of opportunity to obtain it, or the encouragement there is to seek it. The strength of resolution depends on the sense which God gives to the heart of these things. Persons without such a sense, may seem to themselves to take up resolutions; they may, as it were, force a promise to themselves, and say within themselves, "I will seek as long as I live, I will not give up till I obtain," when they do but deceive themselves.

Their hearts are not in it; neither do they indeed take up any such resolusion as they seem to themselves to do. It is the resolution of the mouth more than of the heart; their hearts are not strongly bent to fulfil what their mouth says. The firmness of resolution lies in the fulness of the disposition of the heart to do what is resolved to be done. Those who are pressing into the kingdom of God, have a disposition of heart to do every thing that is required, and that lies in their power to do, and to continue in it. They have not only earnestness, but steadiness of resolution: They do not seek with a wavering unsteady heart, by turns or fits, being off and on; but it is the constant bent of the soul, if possible, to obtain the kingdom of God.

3. By pressing into the kingdom of God is signified *greatness of endeavour.* It is expressed in Eccles. ix. 10. by doing what our hand finds to do *with our might.* And this is the natural and necessary consequence of the two forementioned things. Where there is strength of desire, and firmness of resolution, there will be answerable endeavours. Persons thus engaged in their hearts will "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and will be violent for heaven; their practice will be agreeable to the counsel of the wise man, in Prov. ii. at the beginning, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God." Here the earnestness of desire and strength of resolution is signified by inclining the ear to wisdom, and applying the heart to understanding; and the greatness of endeavour is denoted by crying after knowledge, and lifting up the voice for understanding; seeking her as silver, and searching for her as for hid treasures: Such desires and resolutions, and such endeavours, go together.

4. Pressing into the kingdom of God denotes an engagedness and earnestness, that is *directly about that business* of getting into the kingdom of God. Persons may be in very great exercise and distress of mind, and that about the condition of their souls; their thoughts and cares may be greatly engaged and taken up about things of a spiritual nature, and yet not be pressing into the kingdom of God, nor towards it. The exercise of their minds is not directly about the work of

seeking salvation, in a diligent attendance on the means that God hath appointed in order to it, but something else that is beside their business; it may be about God's decrees and secret purposes, prying into them, searching for signs whereby they may determine, or at least conjecture, what they are before God makes them known by their accomplishment. They distress their minds with fears that they be not elected, or that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or that their day is past, and that God has given them up to judicial and final hardness, and never intends to shew them mercy; and therefore, that it is in vain for them to seek salvation. Or they intangle themselves about the doctrine of original sin, and other mysterious doctrines of religion that are above their comprehension. Many persons that seem to be in great distress about a future eternal state, get much into a way of perplexing themselves with such things as these. When it is so, let them be never so much concerned and engaged in their minds, they cannot be said to be pressing towards the kingdom of God; because their exercise is not in their *work*, but rather in that which tends to *hinder* them in their work. If they are violent, they are only working violently to *intangle* themselves, and lay blocks in their own way; their pressure is not forwards. Instead of getting along, they do but lose their time, and worse than merely lose it; instead of fighting with the giants that stand in the way to keep them out of Canaan, they spend away their time and strength in conflicting with shadows that appear by the way-side.

Hence we are not to judge of the hopefulness of the way that persons are in, or of the probability of their success in seeking salvation, only by the greatness of the concern and distress that they are in; for many persons have needless distresses that they had much better be without. It is thus very often with persons over-run with the distemper of melancholy; whence the adversary of souls is wont to take great advantage. But then are persons in the most likely way to obtain the kingdom of heaven, when the intent of their minds, and the engagedness of their spirits, is about their *proper work* and business, and all the bent of their souls is to attend on God's means, and to do what he commands and directs them to? The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. ix. 26. "that he did not fight as those that beat the air." Our time is short enough; we had not need to spend it in that which is nothing to the purpose. There are real difficulties and enemies enough for persons to encounter,

to employ all their strength; they had not need to waste it in fighting with phantoms.

5. By pressing into the kingdom of God is denoted a *breaking through opposition and difficulties.* There is in the expression a plain intimation of difficulty. If there were no opposition, but the way was all clear and open, there would be no need of pressing to get along. They therefore that are pressing into the kingdom of God, go on with such engagedness, that they break through the difficulties that are in their way. They are so set for salvation, that those things by which others are discouraged, and stopped, and turned back, do not stop them, but they press through them. Persons ought to be so resolved for heaven, that if by any means they *can* obtain, they *will* obtain. Whether those means be difficult or easy, cross or agreeable, if they are requisite means of salvation, they should be complied with. When any thing is presented to be done, the question should not be, Is it easy or hard? is it agreeable to my carnal inclinations or interest, or against them? But is it a required means of my obtaining an interest in Jesus Christ, and eternal salvation? Thus the apostle, Philip. iii. 11. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." He tells us there in the context what difficulties he broke through, that he suffered the loss of all things, and was willingly made conformable even to Christ's death, though that was attended with such extreme torment and ignominy.

He that is pressing into the kingdom of God, commonly finds many things in the way that are against the grain; but he is not stopped by the cross that lies before him, but takes it up, and carries it. Suppose there be something incumbent on him to do, that is cross to his natural temper, and irksome to him on that account; suppose something that he cannot do without suffering in his estate, or that he apprehends will look odd and strange in the eyes of others, and expose him to ridicule and reproach, or any thing that will offend a neighbour, and get his ill-will, or something that will be very cross to his own carnal appetite—he will *press through such difficulties.* Every thing that is found to be a weight that hinders him in running this race he casts from him, though it be a weight of gold or pearls; yea, if it be a right hand or foot that offends him, he will cut them off, and will not stick at plucking out a right eye with his own hands. These things are insuperable difficulties to those who are not thoroughly engaged in seeking their salvation;

they are stumbling-blocks that they never get over. But it is not so with him that presses into the kingdom of God. Those things (before he was thoroughly roused from his security), about which he was wont to have long parlyings and disputings with his own conscience—employing carnal reason to invent arguments and pleas of excuse—he now sticks at no longer; he has done with this endless disputing and reasoning, and presses violently through all difficulties. Let what will be in the way, heaven is what he must and will obtain, not if he can without difficulty, but if it be possible. He meets with temptation: the devil is often whispering in his ear, setting allurements before him, magnifying the difficulties of the work he is engaged in, telling him that they are insuperable, and that he can never conquer them, and trying all ways in the world to discourage him; but still he presses forward. God has given, and maintains such an earnest spirit for heaven, that the devil cannot stop him in his course; he is not at leisure to lend an ear to what he has to say.—I come now,

II. To shew *why* the kingdom of heaven should be sought in this manner.—It should be thus sought,

1. On account of the *extreme necessity* we are in of getting into the kingdom of heaven. We are in a perishing necessity of it; without it we are utterly and eternally lost. Out of the kingdom of God is no safety; there is no other hiding-place; this is the only city of refuge, in which we can be secure from the avenger that pursues all the ungodly. The vengeance of God will pursue, overtake, and eternally destroy, them that are not in this kingdom. All that are without this inclosure will be swallowed up in an overflowing fiery deluge of wrath. They may stand at the door and knock, and cry, Lord, Lord, open to us, in vain; they will be thrust back; and God will have no mercy on them; they shall be eternally left of him. His fearful vengeance will seize them; the devils will lay hold of them; and all evil will come upon them; and there will be none to pity or help; their case will be utterly desperate, and infinitely doleful. It will be a gone case with them; all offers of mercy and expressions of divine goodness will be finally withdrawn, and all hope will be lost. God will have no kind of regard to their well-being; will take no care of them to save them from any enemy, or any evil; but himself will be their dreadful enemy, and will execute wrath with fury, and will take vengeance in an inexpressibly dreadful manner. Such as shall be in this case will be lost and undone indeed! They will be sunk down into perdition, infinitely below all that we can think.

For who knows the power of God's anger? And who knows the misery of that poor worm, on whom that anger is executed without mercy?

2. On account of the shortness and *uncertainty of the opportunity* for getting into this kingdom. When a few days are past, all our opportunity for it will be gone. Our day is limited. God has set our bounds, and we know not where. While persons are out of this kingdom, they are in danger every hour of being overtaken with wrath. We know not how soon we shall get past that line, beyond which there is no work, device, knowledge, nor wisdom; and therefore we should do what we have to do with our might. Eccles. ix. 10.

3. On account of the *difficulty* of getting into the kingdom of God. There are innumerable difficulties in the way; such as few conquer; most of them that try have not resolution, courage, earnestness, and constancy enough; but they fail, give up, and perish. The difficulties are too many and too great for them that do not violently press forward. They never get along, but stick by the way; are turned aside, or turned back, and ruined. Matth. vii. 14. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Luke xiii. 24. "Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

4. The *possibility* of obtaining. Though it be attended with so much difficulty, yet it is not a thing impossible. Acts, viii. 22. "If perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." 2 Tim. ii. 25. "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." However sinful a person is, and whatever his circumstances are, there is, notwithstanding, a possibility of his salvation. He himself is capable of it, and God is able to accomplish it, and has mercy sufficient for it; and there is sufficient provision made through Christ, that God may do it consistent with the honour of his majesty, justice, and truth. So that there is no want either of sufficiency in God, or capacity in the sinner, in order to this. The greatest and vilest, most blind, dead, hard-hearted sinner living, is a subject capable of saving light and grace. Seeing therefore there is such necessity of obtaining the kingdom of God, and so short a time, and such difficulty, and yet such a possibility, it may well induce us to press into it. Jonah, iii. 8. 9.

5. It is meet that the kingdom of heaven should be thus

sought, because of the *great excellency* of it. We are willing to seek earthly things, of trifling value, with great diligence, and through much difficulty; it therefore certainly becomes us to seek that with great earnestness which is of infinitely greater worth and excellence. And how well may God expect and require it of us, that we should seek it in such a manner, in order to our obtaining it?

6. Such a manner of seeking is *needful to prepare* persons for the kingdom of God. Such earnestness and thoroughness of endeavours, is the ordinary means that God makes use of to bring persons to an acquaintance with themselves, to a sight of their own hearts, to a sense of their own helplessness, and to a despair in their own strength and righteousness. And such engagedness and constancy in seeking the kingdom of heaven, prepare the soul to receive it the more joyfully and thankfully, and the more highly to prize and value it when obtained. So that it is in mercy to us, as well as for the glory of his own name, that God has appointed such earnest seeking, to be the way in which he will bestow the kingdom of heaven.

APPLICATION.

The use I would make of this doctrine, is of *exhortation* to all Christless persons to press into the kingdom of God. Some of you are inquiring what you shall do? You seem to desire to know what is the way wherein salvation is to be sought, and how you may be likely to obtain it. You have now heard the way that the holy word of God directs to. Some are seeking, but it cannot be said of them that they are *pressing* into the kingdom of heaven. There are many that in time past have sought salvation, but not in this manner, and so they never obtained, but are now gone to hell. Some of them sought it year after year, but failed of it, and perished at last. They were overtaken with divine wrath, and are now suffering the fearful misery of damnation, and have no rest day nor night, having no more opportunity to seek, but must suffer and be miserable throughout the never ending ages of eternity. Be exhorted, therefore, not to seek salvation as they did, but let the kingdom of heaven suffer violence from you.

Here I would first answer an *objection* or two, and then proceed to give some *directions* how to press into the kingdom of God.

Object. 1. Some may be ready to say, We cannot do this of ourselves; that strength of desire, and firmness of resolution, that have been spoken of, is out of our reach. If I endeavour to resolve and to seek with engagedness of spirit, I find I fail: my thoughts are presently off from the business, and I feel myself dull, and my engagedness relaxed in spite of all I can do.

Ans. 1. Though earnestness of mind be not immediately in your power, yet the consideration of what has been now said of the *need* of it, may be a means of stirring you up to it. It is true, persons never will be thoroughly engaged in this business, unless it be by God's influence; but God influences persons by means. Persons are not stirred up to a thorough earnestness without some considerations that move them to it. And if persons can but be made sensible of the necessity of salvation, and also duly consider the exceeding difficulty of it, and the greatness of the opposition, and how short and uncertain the time is, but yet are sensible that they have an opportunity, and that there is a possibility of their obtaining, they will need no more in order to their being thoroughly engaged and resolved in this matter. If we see persons slack and unresolved, and unsteady, it is because they do not enough consider these things.

2. Though strong desires and resolutions of mind be not in your power, yet painfulness of endeavours is in your power. It is in your power to take pains in the use of means, yea very great pains. You can be very painful and diligent in watching your own heart, and striving against sin. Though there is all manner of corruption in the heart continually ready to work, yet you can very laboriously watch and strive against these corruptions; and it is in your power, with great diligence to attend the matter of your duty towards God and towards your neighbour. It is in your power to attend all ordinances, and all public and private duties of religion, and to do it with your might. It would be a contradiction to suppose that a man cannot do these things with all the might he has, though he cannot do them with more might than he has. The dulness and deadness of the heart, and slothfulness of disposition, do not hinder men being able to take pains, though it hinders their being willing. That is one thing wherein your laboriousness may appear, even striving against your own dulness. That men have a dead and sluggish heart, does not argue that they be not able to take pains; it is so far from that, that it gives occasion for pains. It is one of the difficulties in the way of duty, that persons have

to strive with, and that gives occasion for struggling and labour. If there were no difficulties attended seeking salvation, there would be no occasion for striving; a man would have nothing to strive about. There is indeed a great deal of difficulty attending all duties required of those that would obtain heaven. It is an exceeding difficult thing for them to keep their thoughts; it is a difficult thing seriously, or to any good purpose, to consider matters of the greatest importance; it is a difficult thing to hear, or read, or pray attentively. But it does not argue that a man cannot strive in these things because they are difficult; nay, he could not strive therein if there were not difficulty in them. For what is there excepting difficulties that any can have to strive or struggle with in any affair or business? Earnestness of mind, and diligence of endeavour, tend to promote each other. He that has an heart earnestly engaged, will take pains; and he that is diligent and painful in all duty, probably will not be so long before he finds the sensibleness of his heart and earnestness of his spirit greatly increased.

Object. 2. Some may object, that if they are earnest, and take a great deal of pains, they shall be in danger of trusting to what they do; they are afraid of doing their duty for fear of making a righteousness of it.

Ans. There is ordinarily no kind of seekers that trust so much to what they do, as slack and dull seekers. Though all seeking salvation, that have never been the subjects of a thorough humiliation, do trust in their own righteousness; yet some do it much more fully than others. Some though they *trust* in their own righteousness, yet are not *quiet* in it. And those who are most disturbed in their self-confidence, (and therefore in the likeliest way to be wholly brought off from it) are not such as go on in a remiss way of seeking, but such as are most earnest and thoroughly engaged; partly because in such a way conscience is kept more sensible. A more awakened conscience will not rest so quietly in moral and religious duties, as one that is less awakened. A dull seeker's conscience will be in a great measure satisfied and quieted with his own works and performances; but one that is thoroughly awakened cannot be stilled or pacified with such things as these. In this way persons gain much more knowledge of themselves, and acquaintance with their own hearts, than in a negligent slight way of seeking; for they have a great deal more experience of themselves. It is experience of ourselves, and finding what we

are, that God commonly makes use of as the means of bringing us off from all dependence on ourselves. But men never get acquaintance with themselves so fast, as in the most earnest way of seeking. They that are in this way have more to engage them to think of their sins, and strictly to observe themselves, and have much more to do with their own hearts, than others. Such a one has much more experience of his own weakness, than another that does not put forth and try his strength; and will therefore sooner see himself dead in sin. Such a one, though he hath a disposition continually to be flying to his own righteousness, yet finds rest in nothing; he wanders about from one thing to another, seeking something to ease his disquieted conscience; he is driven from one refuge to another, goes from mountain to hill, seeking rest and finding none; and therefore will the sooner prove that there is no rest to be found, nor trust to be put, in any creature whatsoever.

It is therefore quite a wrong notion that some entertain, that the more they do, the more they shall depend on it. Whereas the reverse is true; the more they do, or the more thorough they are in seeking, the less will they be likely to rest in their doings, and the sooner will they see the vanity of all that they do. So that persons will exceedingly miss it, if ever they neglect to do any duty either to God or man, whether it be any duty of religion, justice, or charity, under a notion of its exposing them to trust in their own righteousness. It is very true, that it is a common thing for persons, when they earnestly seek salvation, to trust in the pains that they take: But yet commonly those that go on in a more slight way, trust a great deal more securely to their dull services, than he that is pressing into the kingdom of God does to his earnestness. Men's slackness in religion, and their trust in their own righteousness, strengthen and establish one another. Their trust in what they have done, and what they now do, settles them in a slothful rest and ease, and hinders their being sensible of their need of rousing up themselves and pressing forward. And on the other hand, their negligence tends so to benumb them, and keep them in such ignorance of themselves, that the most miserable refuges are stupidly rested in as sufficient. Therefore we see, that when persons have been going on for a long time in such a way, and God afterwards comes more thoroughly to awaken them, and to stir them up to be in good earnest, he shakes all their old foundations, and rouses them out of their old resting-places; so that they cannot

quiet themselves with those things that formerly kept them secure.

I would now proceed to give some *directions* how you should press into the kingdom of God.

1. Be directed to sacrifice *every thing* to your soul's eternal interest. Let seeking this be so much your bent, and what you are so resolved in, that you will make every thing give place to it. Let nothing stand before your resolution of seeking the kingdom of God. Whatever it be that you used to look upon as a convenience, or comfort, or ease, or thing desirable on any account, if it stands in the way of this great concern, let it be dismissed without hesitation; and if it be of that nature that it is likely always to be an hindrance, then wholly have done with it, and never entertain any expectation from it more. If in time past you have, for the sake of worldly gain, involved yourself in more care and business than you find to be consistent with your being so thorough in the business of religion as you ought to be, then get into some other way, though you suffer in your worldly interest by it. Or if you have heretofore been conversant with company that you have reason to think have been, and will be a snare to you, and a hindrance to this great design in any wise, break off from their society, however it may expose you to reproach from your old companions, or let what will be the effect of it. Whatever it be that stands in the way of your most advantageously seeking salvation—whether it be some dear sinful pleasure, or strong carnal appetite, or credit and honour, or the good-will of some persons whose friendship you desire, and whose esteem and liking you have highly valued—and though there be danger, if you do as you ought, that you shall be looked upon by them as odd and ridiculous, and become contemptible in their eyes—or if it be your case and indolence, and aversion to continual labour; or your outward convenience in any respect, whereby you might avoid difficulties of one kind or other—*let all go*; offer up all such things together, as it were, in one sacrifice, to the interest of your soul. Let nothing stand in competition with this, but make every thing to fall before it. If the flesh must be crossed, then cross it, spare it not, crucify it, and do not be afraid of being too cruel to it. Gal. v. 24. "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Have no dependence on any worldly enjoyment whatsoever. Let salvation be the one thing with you. This is what is certainly required of you: and this is what many stick

at; this giving up other things for salvation, is a stumbling-block that few get over. While others pressed into the kingdom of God at the preaching of John the Baptist, Herod was pretty much stirred up by his preaching. It is said, he heard him, and observed him, and did many things; but when he came to tell him that he must part with his beloved Herodias, here he stuck; this he never would yield to, Mark, vii. 18—20. The rich young man was considerably concerned for salvation; and accordingly was a very strict liver in many things: but when Christ came to direct him to go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and follow him, he could not find in his heart to comply with it, but went away sorrowful. He had great possessions, and set his heart much on his estate, and could not bear to part with it. It may be, if Christ had directed him only to give away a considerable part of his estate, he would have done it; yea, perhaps, if he had bid him part with half of it, he would have complied with it: but when he directed him to throw up all, he could not grapple with such a proposal. Herein the straitness of the gate very much consists; and it is on this account that so many seek to enter in, and are not able. There are many that have a great mind to salvation, and spend great part of their time in wishing that they had it, but they will not comply with the necessary means.

2. Be directed to *forget the things that are behind*; that is, not to keep thinking and making much of what you have done, but let your mind be wholly intent on what you have to do. In some sense you ought to look back; you should look back on your sins. Jer. ii. 23. "See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done." You should look back on the wretchedness of your religious performances, and consider how you have fallen short in them; how exceedingly polluted all your duties have been, and how justly God might reject and loath them, and you for them. But you ought not to spend your time in looking back, as many persons do, thinking how much they have done for their salvation; what great pains they have taken, how that they have done what they can, and do not see how they can do more; how long a time they have been seeking, and how much more they have done than others, and even than such and such who have obtained mercy. They think with themselves how hardly God deals with them, that he does not extend mercy to them, but turns a deaf ear to their cries; and hence discourage themselves, and complain of God. Do not thus spend your time in looking on what

is past, but look forward, and consider what is before you; consider what it is that you can do, and what it is necessary that you should do, and what God calls you still to do, in order to your own salvation. The apostle, in the 3d chapter to the Philippians, tells us what things he did while a Jew, how much he had to boast of, if any could boast; but he tells us, that he forgot those things, and all others that were behind, and reached forth towards the things that were before, pressing forwards towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

3. Labour to get your *heart thoroughly disposed* to go on and hold out to the end. Many that seem to be earnest have not a heart thus disposed. It is a common thing for persons to appear greatly affected for a little while; but all is soon past away, and there is no more to be seen of it. Labour therefore to obtain a thorough willingness and preparation of spirit, to continue seeking, in the use of your utmost endeavours, without limitation; and do not think your whole life too long. And in order to this be advised to two things.

(1) Remember that if ever God bestows mercy upon you, he will use his sovereign pleasure about the *time when*. He will bestow it on some in a little time, and on others not till they have sought it long. If other persons are soon enlightened and comforted, while you remain long in darkness, there is no other way but for you to wait. God will act arbitrarily in this matter, and you cannot help it. You must even be content to wait, in a way of laborious and earnest striving, till his time comes. If you refuse, you will but undo yourself; and when you shall hereafter find yourself undone, and see that your case is past remedy, how will you condemn yourself for foregoing a great probability of salvation, only because you had not patience to hold out, and was not willing to be at the trouble of a persevering labour? And what will it avail before God or your own conscience to say, that you could not bear to be obliged to seek salvation so long, when God bestowed it on others that sought it but for a very short time? Though God may have bestowed the testimonies of his favour on others in a few days or hours after they have begun earnestly to seek it, how does that alter the case as to you, if there proves to be a necessity of your laboriously seeking many years before you obtain them? Is salvation less worth taking a great deal of pains for, because, through the sovereign pleasure of God,

others have obtained it with comparatively little pains? If there are two persons, the one of which has obtained converting grace with comparative ease, and another that has obtained it after continuing for many years in the greatest and most earnest labours after it, how little difference does it make at last, when once salvation is obtained! Put all the *labour* and pains, the long continued difficulties and strugglings of the one in the scale against salvation, and how little does it substract; and put the ease with which the other has obtained in the scale with salvation, and how little does it add? What is either added or substracted is lighter than vanity, and a thing worthy of no consideration, when compared with that infinite benefit that is obtained. Indeed if you were ten thousand years, and all that time should strive and press forward with as great earnestness as ever a person did for one day, all this would bear no proportion to the importance of the benefit; and it will doubtless appear little to you, when once you come to be in actual possession of eternal glory, and to see what that eternal misery is which you have escaped. You must not think much of your pains, and of the length of time; you must press towards the kingdom of God, and do your utmost, and hold out to the end, and learn to make no account of it when you have done. You must undertake the business of seeking salvation upon these terms, and with no other expectation than this, that if ever God bestows mercy it will be in his own time; and not only so, but also that when you have doneall, God will not hold himself obliged to show you mercy at last.

(2.) Endeavour now thoroughly to weigh in your mind the difficulty, and to *count the cost* of perseverance in seeking salvation. You that are now setting out in this business, (as there are many here who have very lately set about it;—Praised be the name of God that he has stirred you up to it!) be exhorted to attend this direction. Do not undertake in this affair with any other thought, but of giving yourself wholly to it for the remaining part of your life, and going through many and great difficulties in it. Take heed that you do not engage secretly upon this condition, that you shall obtain in a little time, promising yourself that it shall be within this present season of the pouring out of God's Spirit, or with any other limitation of time whatsoever. Many, when they begin (seeming to set out very earnestly) do not expect that they shall need to seek very long, and so do not prepare themselves for it. And therefore, when they come to find it otherwise, and meet with un-

expected difficulty, they are found unguarded, and easily overthrown. But let me advise you all who are now seeking salvation, not to entertain any self-flattering thoughts; but weigh the utmost difficulties of perseverance, and be provided for them, having your mind fixed in it to go through them, let them be what they will. Consider now beforehand, how tedious it would be, with utmost earnestness and labour, to strive after salvation for many years, in the mean-time receiving no joyful or comfortable evidence of your having obtained. Consider what a great temptation to discouragement there probably would be in it; how apt you would be to yield the case; how ready to think that it is in vain for you to seek any longer, and that God never intends to shew you mercy, in that he has not yet done it; how apt you would be to think with yourself, "What an uncomfortable life do I live! how much more unpleasantly do I spend my time than others that do not perplex their minds about the things of another world, but are at ease, and take the comfort of their worldly enjoyments!" Consider what a temptation there would probably be in it, if you saw others brought in that began to seek the kingdom of heaven long after you, rejoicing in a hope and sense of God's favour, after but little pains and a short time of awakening; while you, from day to day, and from year to year, seemed to labour in vain. Prepare for such temptations now. Lay in beforehand for such trials and difficulties, that you may not think any strange thing has happened when they come.

I hope that those who have given attention to what has been said, have by this time conceived, in some measure, what is signified by the expression in the text, and after what manner they ought to press into the kingdom of God. Here is this to induce you to a compliance with what you have been directed to; if you sit still, you die; if you go backward, behold you shall surely die; if you go forward, you may live. And though God has not bound himself to any thing that a person does while destitute of faith, and out of Christ, yet there is great probability, that in a way of hearkening to this counsel you will live; and that by pressing onward, and persevering, you will at last, as it were by violence, take the kingdom of heaven. Those of you who have not only heard the directions given, but shall through God's merciful assistance, practise according to them, are those that probably will overcome. These we may well hope at last to see standing with the Lamb on mount Sion, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands; when all your labour and toil will be abundantly compensated, and you

will not repent that you have taken so much pains, and denied yourself so much, and waited so long. This self-denial, this waiting, will then look little, and vanish into nothing in your eyes, being all swallowed up in the first minute's enjoyment of that glory that you will then possess, and will uninterruptedly possess and enjoy to all eternity.

4th direction. Improve the present season of the pouring out of the Spirit of God on this town. Prudence in any affair whatsoever consists very much in minding and improving our opportunities. If you would have spiritual prosperity, you must exercise prudence in the concerns of your souls, as well as in outward concerns when you seek outward prosperity. The prudent husbandman will observe his opportunities; he will improve seed-time and harvest; he will make his advantage of the showers and shines of heaven. The prudent merchant will discern his opportunities; he will not be idle on a market-day; he is careful not to let slip his seasons for enriching himself: So will those who prudently seek the fruits of righteousness, and the merchandise of wisdom, improve their opportunities for their eternal wealth and happiness.

God is pleased at this time, in a very remarkable manner, to pour out his Spirit amongst us; (glory be to his name!) You that have a mind to obtain converting grace, and to go to heaven when you die, now is your season! Now, if you have any sort of prudence for your own salvation, and have not a mind to go to hell, improve this time! Now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation! You that in time past have been called upon, and have turned a deaf ear to God's voice, and long stood out and resisted his commands and counsels, hear God's voice to day, while it is called to-day! Do not harden your hearts at such a day as this! Now you have a special and remarkable price put into your hands to get wisdom, if you have but a heart to improve it.

God hath his certain days or appointed seasons of exercising both mercy and judgment. There are some remarkable times of wrath, laid out by God for his awful visitation, and the executions of his anger; which times are called days of vengeance, Prov. vi. 34. Wherein God will visit for sin, Exod. xxxii. 34. And so, on the contrary, God has laid out in his sovereign counsels seasons of remarkable mercy, wherein he will manifest himself in the exercises of his grace and loving-kindness, more than at other times. Such times in scripture are called by way of eminency, accepted times, and days of salvation and also days of God's visitation; because they are

days wherein God will visit in a way of mercy; as Luke xix. 44. "And shall lay thee even with the ground and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." It is such a time now in this town; it is with us a day of God's gracious visitation. It is indeed a day of grace with us as long as we live in this world, in the enjoyment of the means of grace; but such a time as this, is especially, and in a distinguishing manner, a day of grace. There is a door of mercy always standing open for sinners; but at such a day as this, God opens an extraordinary door.

We are directed to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near, Isai. lv. 6. If you that are hitherto Christless, be not strangely besotted and infatuated, you will by all means improve such an opportunity as this to get heaven, when heaven is brought so near, when the fountain is opened in the midst of us in so extraordinary a manner. Now is the time to obtain a supply of the necessities of your poor perishing souls! This is the day for sinners that have a mind to be converted before they die, when God is dealing forth so liberally and bountifully amongst us; when conversion and salvation work is going on amongst us from Sabbath to Sabbath, and many are pressing into the kingdom of God! Now do not stay behind, but press in amongst the rest! Others have been stirred up to be in good earnest, and have taken heaven by violence; be intreated to follow their example, if you would have a part of the inheritance with them, and would not be left at the great day, when they are taken!

How should it move you to consider that you have this opportunity now in your hands! You are in the actual possession of it! If it were past, it would not be in your power to recover it, or in the power of any creature to bring it back for you; but it is not past; it is now, at this day. Now is the accepted time, even while it is called to-day! Will you sit still at such a time? Will you sleep in such a harvest? Will you deal with a slack hand, and stay behind out of mere sloth, or love to some lust, or lothness to grapple with some small difficulty, or to put yourself a little out of your way, when so many are flowing to the goodness of the Lord! You are behind still; and so you will be in danger of being left behind, when the whole number is compleated that are to enter in, if you do not earnestly bestir yourself! To be left behind at the close of such a season as this, will be awful—next to being left behind

on that day when God's saints shall mount up as with wings to meet the Lord in the air—and will be what will appear very threatening of it.

God is now calling you in an extraordinary manner: and it is agreeable to the will and word of Christ, that I should now, in his name, call you, as one set over you, and sent to you to that end; so it is his will that you should hearken to what I say, as his voice. I therefore beseech you in Christ's stead now to press into the kingdom of God! Whoever you are, whether young or old, small or great: if you are a great sinner, if you have been a backslider, if you have quenched the Spirit, be who you will, do not stand making objections, but arise, apply yourself to your work! Do what you have to do with your might. Christ is calling you before, and holding forth his grace, and everlasting benefits, and wrath is pursuing you behind; wherefore fly for your life, and look not behind you!

But here I would particularly direct myself to several sorts of persons.

I. To those sinners who are in a measure awakened, and are concerned for their salvation. You have reason to be glad that you have such an opportunity, and to prize it above gold. To induce you to prize and improve it, consider several things.

1. God has doubtless a design now to deal forth saving blessings to a number. God has done it to some already, and it is not probable that he has yet finished his work amongst us: We may well hope still to see others brought out of darkness into marvellous light. And therefore,

2. God comes this day, and knocks at many persons' doors, and at your door among the rest. God seems to be come in a very unusual manner amongst us, upon a gracious and merciful design; a design of saving a number of poor miserable souls out of a lost and perishing condition, and of bringing them into a happy state and eternal glory! This is offered to you, not only as it has always been in the word and ordinances, but by the particular influences of the Spirit of Christ awakening you! This special offer is made to many amongst us; and you are not passed over. Christ has not forgot you; but has come to your door; and there as it were stands waiting for you to open to him. If you have wisdom and discretion to discern your own advantage, you will know that now is your opportunity.

3. How much more easily converting grace is obtained at such a time, than at other times. The work is equally easy with God at all times; but there is far less difficulty in the way as to *men* at such a time, than at other times. It is, as I said before, a day of God's gracious visitation; a day that he has as it were set apart for the more liberally and bountifully dispensing of his grace; a day wherein God's hand is opened wide. Experience shews it. God seems to be more ready to help, to give proper convictions, to help against temptations, and let in divine light. He seems to carry on his work with a more glorious discovery of his power, and Satan is more chained up than at other times. Those difficulties and temptations that persons before stuck at, from year to year, they are soon helped over. The work of God is carried on with greater speed and swiftness, and there are often instances of sudden conversion at such a time. So it was in the apostles days, when there was a time of the most extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit that ever was. How quick and sudden were conversions in those days! Such instances as that of the jailor abounded then, in fulfilment of that prophecy, Isai. lxvi. 7. 8. "Before she travailed, she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." So it is in some degree, whenever there is an extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God; more or less so, in proportion to the greatness of that effusion. There is seldom such quick work made of it at other times. Persons are not so soon delivered from their various temptations and entanglements; but are much longer wandering in a wilderness, and groping in darkness. And yet,

4. There are probably some here present that are now concerned about their salvation, that never will obtain. It is not to be supposed that all that are now moved and awakened, will ever be savingly converted. Doubtless there are many now seeking that will not be able to enter. When has it been so in times past, when there have been times of great out-pourings of God's Spirit, but that many who for a while have enquired with others, what they should do to be saved, have failed, and afterwards grown hard and secure? All of you that are now awakened, have a mind to obtain salvation, and probably hope to get a title to heaven, in the time of this present moving of God's Spirit: But yet, (though it be awful to be spoken, and awful to be thought), we have no reason to

think any other, than that some of you will burn in hell to all eternity. You all are afraid of hell, and seem at present disposed to take pains to be delivered from it; and yet it would be unreasonable to think any other, than that some of you will have your portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Though there are so many that seem to obtain so easily, having been but a little while under convictions, yet, for all that, some never will obtain. Some will soon lose the sense of things they now have; though their awakenings seem to be very considerable for the present, they will not hold; they have not hearts disposed to hold on through very many difficulties. Some that have set out for heaven, and hope as much as others to obtain, are indeed but slighty and slack, even now, in the midst of such a time as this. And others, who for the present seem to be more in earnest, will probably, before long, decline and fail, and gradually return to be as they were before. The convictions of some seem to be great, while that which is the occasion of their convictions is new; which, when that begins to grow old, will gradually decay and wear off. Thus, it may be, the occasion of your awakening has been the hearing of the conversion of some person, or seeing so extraordinary a dispensation of Providence as this in which God now appears amongst us; but by and by the newness and freshness of these things will be gone, and so will not affect your mind as now they do; and it may be your convictions will go away with it.

Though this be a time wherein God doth more liberally bestow his grace, and so a time of greater advantage for obtaining it; yet there seems to be, upon some accounts, greater danger of backsliding, than when persons are awakened at other times. For commonly such extraordinary times do not last long; and then when they cease, there are multitudes that lose their convictions as it were together.

We speak of it as a happy thing, that God is pleased to cause such a time amongst us, and so it is indeed: but there are some to whom it will be no benefit; it will be an occasion of their greater misery; they will wish they had never seen this time; it will be more tolerable for those that never saw it, or any thing like it, in the day of judgment, than for them. It is an awful consideration, that there are probably those here, whom the great Judge will hereafter call to a strict account about this very thing, why they no better improved this opportunity, when he set open the fountain of his grace, and so loudly called upon them, and came and strove with them in particu-

lar, by the awakening influences of his Spirit; and they will have no good account to give to the Judge, but their mouths will be stopped, and they will stand speechless before him.

You had need therefore to be earnest, and very resolved in this affair, that you may not be one of those who shall thus fail, that you may so fight, as not uncertainly, and so run, as that you may win the prize.

5. Consider in what sad circumstances times of extraordinary effusion of God's Spirit commonly leave persons, when they leave them unconverted. They *find* them in a doleful, because in a natural, condition; but commonly *leave* them in a much more doleful condition. They are left dreadfully hardened, and with a great increase of guilt, and their souls under a more strong dominion and possession of Satan. And frequently seasons of extraordinary advantage for salvation, when they pass over persons, and they do not improve them, nor receive any good in them, seal their damnation. As such seasons leave them, God for ever leaves them, and gives them up to judicial hardness. Luke xix. 41, 42. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

6. Consider, that it is very uncertain whether you will ever see such another time as this. If there should be such another time, it is very uncertain whether you will live to see it. Many that are now concerned for their salvation amongst us, will probably be in their graves, and it may be in hell before that time; and if you should miss this opportunity, it may be so with you. And what good will that do you, to have the Spirit of God poured out upon earth, in the place where you once lived, while you are tormented in hell? What will it avail you, that others are crying, What shall I do to be saved? while you are shut up for ever in the bottomless pit, and are wailing and gnashing your teeth in everlasting burnings?

Wherefore improve this opportunity, while God is pouring out his Spirit, and you are on earth, and while you dwell in that place where the Spirit of God is thus poured out, and you yourself have the awakening influences of it, that you may never wail and gnash your teeth in hell, but may sing in heaven for ever, with others that are redemeed from amongst men, and redeemed amongst us.

7. If you should see another such time, it will be under far greater disadvantages than now. You will probably then be much older, and will have more hardened your heart; and so will be under less probability of receiving good. Some persons are so hardened in sin, and so left of God, that they can live through such a time as this, and not be much awakened or affected by it; they can stand their ground, and be but little moved. And so it may be with you, by another such time, if there should be another amongst us, and you should live to see it. The case in all probability will be greatly altered with you by that time. If you should continue Christless and graceless till then, you will be much further from the kingdom of God, and much deeper involved in snares and misery; and the devil will probably have a vastly greater advantage against you, to tempt and confound you.

8. We do not know but that God is now gathering in his elect, before some great and sore judgment. It has been God's manner before he casts off a visible people, or brings some great and destroying judgments upon them, first to gather in his elect, that they may be secure. So it was before the casting off the Jews from being God's people. There was first a very remarkable pouring out of the Spirit, and gathering in of the elect, by the preaching of the apostles and evangelists, as we read in the beginning of the Acts: But after this harvest and its gleanings were over, the rest were blinded, and hardened; the gospel had little success amongst them, and the nation was given up, and cast off from being God's people, and their city and land was destroyed by the Romans in a terrible manner; and they have been cast off by God now for a great many ages, and still remain a hardened and rejected people. So we read in the beginning of the 7th chapter of the Revelations, that God, when about to bring destroying judgments on the earth, first sealed his servants in the forehead. He set his seal upon the hearts of the elect, gave them the saving influences and indwelling of his Spirit, by which they were sealed to the day of redemption. Rev. vii. 1—3. "And after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the

trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

And this may be the case now, that God is about, in a great measure, to forsake this land, and give up this people, and to bring most awful and overwhelming judgments upon it, and that he is now gathering in his elect, to secure them from the calamity. The state of the nation, and of this land, never looked so threatening of such a thing as at this day. The present aspect of things exceedingly threatens vital religion, and even those truths that are especially the foundation of it, out of this land. If it should be so, how awful will the case be with those that shall be left, and not brought in, while God continues the influences of his Spirit, to gather in those that are to be redeemed from amongst us!

9. If you neglect the present opportunity, and be finally unbelieving, those that are converted in this time of the pouring out of God's Spirit will rise up in judgment against you. Your neighbours, your relations, acquaintance, or companions that are converted, will that day appear against you. They will not only be taken while you are left, mounting up with joy to meet the Lord in the air—at his right hand with glorious saints and angels, while you are at the left with devils—but they will rise up in judgment *against* you. However friendly you have been together, and have taken pleasure in one another's company, and have often familiarly conversed together, they will then surely appear against you. They will rise up as witnesses, and will declare what a precious opportunity you had, and did not improve; how you continued unbelieving, and rejected the offers of a Saviour, when those offers were made in so extraordinary a manner, and when so many others were prevailed upon to accept of Christ; how you was negligent and slack, and did not know the things that belonged to your peace, in that your day. And not only so, but they shall be your judges, as assessors with the great Judge; and as such will appear against you; they will be with the Judge in passing sentence upon you. 1 Cor. vi 2 "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" Christ will admit them to the honour of judging the world with him: "They shall sit with him in his throne." Rev. iii. 21. They shall sit with Christ in his throne of government, and they shall sit with him in his throne of judgment, and shall be judges with him when you are judged, and as such shall condemn you.

10. and *lastly*, You do not know that you shall live through the present time of the pouring out of God's Spirit. You may

be taken away in the midst of it, or you may be taken away in the beginning of it; as God in his providence is putting you in mind, by the late instance of death in a young person in the town*. God has of late been very awful in his dealings with us, in the repeated deaths of young persons amongst us. This should stir every one up to be in the more haste to press into the kingdom of God, that so you may be safe whenever death comes. This is a blessed season and opportunity; but you do not know how little of it you may have. You may have much less of it than others; may by death be suddenly snatched away from all advantages that are here enjoyed for the good of souls. Therefore make haste, and escape for thy life. One moment's delay is dangerous; for wrath is pursuing, and divine vengeance hanging over every uncovered person.

Let these considerations move every one to be improving this opportunity, that while others receive saving good, and are made heirs of eternal glory, you may not be left behind, in the same miserable doleful circumstances in which you came into the world, a poor captive to sin and Satan, a lost sheep, a perishing, undone creature, sinking down into everlasting perdition; that you may not be one of them spoken of, Jer. xvii. 6. "That shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see good when good comes." If you do not improve this opportunity, remember I have told you, you will hereafter lament it; and if you do not lament it in this world, then I will leave it with you to remember it throughout a miserable eternity.

II. I would address myself to such as yet remain unawakened. It is an awful thing that there should be any one person remaining secure amongst us at such a time as this; but yet it is to be feared that there are some of this sort. I would here a little expostulate with such persons.

1. When do you expect that it will be more likely that you should be awakened and wrought upon than now? You are in a Christless condition; and yet without doubt intend to go to heaven; and therefore intend to be converted some time before you die; but this is not to be expected till you are first awakened, and deeply concerned about the welfare of your soul, and brought earnestly to seek God's converting grace. And when do you intend that this shall be? How do you lay things out in your own mind, or what projection have you about this

* Joseph Clark's wife, a young woman lately married, that died suddenly the week before this was delivered.

matter? Is it ever so likely that a person will be awakened, as at such a time as this? How do we see many, who before were secure, now roused out of their sleep, and crying, What shall I do to be saved? But you are yet secure! Do you flatter yourself that it will be more likely you should be awakened when it is a dull and dead time? Do you lay matters out thus in your own mind, that though you are senseless when others are generally awakened, that yet you shall be awakened when others are generally senseless? Or do you hope to see another such time of the pouring out of God's Spirit hereafter? And do you think it will be more likely that you should be wrought upon then, than now? And why do you think so? Is it because then you shall be so much older than you are now, and so that your heart will be grown softer and more tender with age? or because you will then have stood out so much longer against the calls of the gospel, and all means of grace? Do you think it more likely that God will give you the needed influences of his spirit then, than now, because then you will have provoked him so much more, and your sin and guilt will be so much greater? And do you think it will be any benefit to you, to stand it out through the present season of grace, as proof against the extraordinary means of awakening there are? Do you think that this will be a good preparation for a saving work of the Spirit hereafter?

2. What means do you expect to be awakened by? As to the awakening awful things of the word of God, you have had those set before you times without number, in the most moving manner that the dispensers of the word have been capable of. As to particular solemn warnings, directed to those that are in your circumstances, you have had them frequently, and have them now from time to time. Do you expect to be awakened by awful providences? Those also you have lately had, of the most awakening nature, one after another. Do you expect to be moved by the deaths of others? We have lately had repeated instances of these. There have been deaths of old and young: The year has been remarkable for the deaths of young persons in the bloom of life; and some of them very sudden deaths. Will the conversion of others move you? There is indeed scarce any thing that is found to have so great a tendency to stir persons up as this: And this you have been tried with of late in frequent instances; but are hitherto proof against it. Will a general pouring out of the Spirit, and seeing a concern about salvation amongst all sorts of people, do it? This means you now have, but without effect. Yea, you have al-

these things together; you have the solemn warnings of God's word, and awful instances of death, and the conversion of others, and see a general concern about salvation: But all together do not move you to any great concern about your own precious, immortal, and miserable soul. Therefore consider by what means it is that you expect ever to be awakened.

You have heard that it is probable some who are now awakened, will never obtain salvation; how dark then does it look upon you that remain stupidly unawakened! Those who are not moved at such a time as this, come to adult age, have reason to fear whether they are not given up to judicial hardness. I do not say they have reason to *conclude* it, but they have reason to fear it. How dark doth it look upon you, that God comes and knocks at so many persons' doors, and misses yours! that God is giving the strivings of his Spirit so generally amongst us, while you are left senseless!

3. Do you expect to obtain salvation without ever seeking it? If you are sensible that there is a necessity of your seeking in order to obtaining, and ever intend to seek, one would think you could not avoid it at such a time as this. Inquire therefore, whether you intend to go to heaven, living all your days a secure, negligent, careless life.——Or,

4. Do you think you can bear the damnation of hell? Do you imagine that you can tolerably endure the devouring fire, and everlasting burnings? Do you hope that you shall be able to grapple with the vengeance of God Almighty, when he girds himself with strength, and cloaths himself with wrath? Do you think to strengthen yourself against God, and to be able to make your part good with him? 1 Cor. x. 22. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" Do you flatter yourself that you shall find out ways for your ease and support, and to make it out tolerably well, to bear up your spirit in those everlasting burnings that are prepared for the devil and his angels? Ezek. xxii. 14. "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?"—It is a difficult thing to conceive what such Christless persons think, that are unconcerned at such a time.

III. I would direct myself to them who are grown considerably into years, and are yet in a natural condition. I would now take occasion earnestly to exhort you to improve this extraordinary opportunity and press into the kingdom of God. You have lost many advantages that once you had, and now have not the same advantages that others have. The case is

very different with you from what it is with many of your neighbours. You, above all, had need to improve such an opportunity. Now is the time for you to bestir yourself, and take the kingdom of heaven!—Consider,

1. Now there seems to be a door opened for old sinners. Now God is dealing forth freely to all sorts: His hand is opened wide, and he does not pass by old ones so much as he used to do. You are not under such advantages as others who are younger; but yet, so wonderfully has God ordered it, that now you are not destitute of great advantage. Though old in sin, God has put a new and extraordinary advantage into your hands. O! improve this price you have to get wisdom! You that have been long seeking to enter in at the strait gate and yet remain without, now take your opportunity and press in! You that have been long in the wilderness, fighting with various temptations, labouring under discouragements, ready to give up the case, and have been often tempted to despair, now, behold the door that God opens for you! Do not give way to discouragements now; this is not a time for it. Do not spend time in thinking, that you have done what you can already, and that you are not elected, and in giving way to other perplexing, weakening, disheartening temptations. Do not waste away this precious opportunity in such a manner. You have no time to spare for such things as these; God calls you now to something else. Improve this time in seeking and striving for salvation, and not in that which tends to hinder it.—It is no time now for you to stand talking with the devil; but hearken to God, and apply yourself to that which he does now so loudly call you to.

Some of you have often lamented the loss of past opportunities, particularly, the loss of the time of youth, and have been wishing that you had so good an opportunity again; and have been ready to say, "O! if I was young again, how would I improve such an advantage!" That opportunity which you have had in time past is irrecoverable; you can never have it again: but God can give you other advantages of another sort, that are very great, and he is so doing at this day. He is now putting a new opportunity into your hands; though not of the same kind with that which you once had, and have lost, yet in some respects as great of another kind. If you lament your folly in neglecting and losing past opportunities, then do not be guilty of the folly of neglecting the opportunity which God now gives you. This opportunity you could not have purchased

ed, if you would have given all that you had in the world for it. But God is putting it into your hands himself, of his own free and sovereign mercy, without your purchasing it. Therefore when you have it, do not neglect it.

2. It is a great deal more likely with respect to such persons than others, that this is their last time. There will be a last time of special offer of salvation to impenitent sinners.—"God's Spirit shall not always strive with man," Gen. vi. 3. God sometimes continues long knocking at the doors of wicked men's hearts; but there are the *last* knocks, and the *last* calls, that ever they shall have. And sometimes God's last calls are the loudest; and then if sinners do not hearken, he finally leaves them. How long has God been knocking at many of your doors that are old in sin! It is a great deal more likely that these are his last knocks. You have resisted God's Spirit in times past, and have hardened your heart once and again; but God will not be thus dealt with always. There is danger, that if now, after so long a time, you will not hearken, he will utterly desert you, and leave you to walk in your own counsels.

It seems, by God's providence, as though God had yet an elect number amongst old sinners in this place, that perhaps he is now about to bring in. It looks as though there were some that long lived under Mr. STODDARD's ministry, that God has not utterly cast off, though they so stood it out under such great means as they then enjoyed. It is to be hoped that God will now bring in a remnant from among them. But it is the more likely that God is now about finishing with them, one way or other, for their having been so long the subjects of such extraordinary means. You have seen former times of the pouring out of God's Spirit upon the town, when others were taken and you left, others were called out of darkness into marvellous light, and were brought into a glorious and happy state, and you saw not good when good came. How dark will your circumstances appear, if you shall also stand it out through this opportunity, and still be left behind! Take heed that you be not of those spoken of, Heb. vi. 7, 8. that are like the "earth that has rain coming oft upon it, and only bears briars and thorns." As we see there are some pieces of ground, the more showers of rain fall upon them, the more fruitful seasons there are, the more do the briars, and other useless and hurtful plants, that are rooted in them, grow and flourish. Of such ground the apostle says, "It is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." The way that the hus-

bandman takes with such ground, is, to set fire to it, to burn up the growth of it.—If you miss this opportunity, there is danger that you will be utterly rejected, and that your end will be to be burned. And if this is to be, it is to be feared, that you are not far from, but nigh unto cursing.

Those of you that are already grown old in sin, and are now under awakenings, when you feel your convictions begin to go off, if ever that should be, then remember what you have now been told: It may well then strike you to the heart!

IV. I would direct the advice to those that are young, and now under their first special convictions. I would earnestly urge such to improve this opportunity, and press into the kingdom of God.—Consider two things,

1. You have all manner of advantages now centering upon you. It is a time of great advantage for all; but your advantages are above others. There is no other sort of persons that have now so great and happy an opportunity as you have.—You have the great advantage that is common to all who live in this place, viz. That now it is a time of the extraordinary pouring out of the spirit of God. And have you not that great advantage, the awakening influences of the Spirit of God on you in particular? and besides you have this peculiar advantage, that you are now in your youth. And added to this, you have another unspeakable advantage, that you now are under your first convictions. Happy is he that never has hardened his heart, and blocked up his own way to heaven by backsliding, and has now the awakening influences of God's Spirit, if God does but enable him thoroughly to improve them! Such above all in the world bid fair for the kingdom of God. God is wont on such above any kind of persons, as it were easily and readily to bestow the saving grace and comforts of his Spirit. Instances of speedy and sudden conversion are most commonly found among such. Happy are they that have the Spirit of God with them, and never have quenched it, if they did but know the price they have in their hands!

If you have a sense of your necessity of salvation, and the great worth and value of it, you will be willing to take the surest way to it, or that which has the greatest probability of success; and that certainly is, thoroughly to improve your first convictions. If you do so, it is not likely that you will fail; there is the greatest probability that you will succeed.—What is it not worth, to have such an advantage in one's hands for obtaining eternal life? The present season of the pouring

out of God's Spirit, is the first that many of you who are now under awakenings have ever seen, since you came to years of understanding. On which account, it is the greatest opportunity that ever you have had, and probably by far the greatest that ever you will have. There are many here present who wish they had such an opportunity, but they never can obtain it; they cannot buy it for money; but you have it in your possession, and can improve it if you will. But yet,

2. There is on some accounts greater danger that such as are in your circumstances will fail of thoroughly improving their convictions, with respect to stedfastness and perseverance, than others. Those that are young are more unstable than elder persons. They who never had convictions before, have less experience of the difficulty of the work they have engaged in; they are more ready to think that they shall obtain salvation easily, and are more easily discouraged by disappointments; and young persons have less reason and consideration to fortify them against temptations to backsliding. You should therefore labour now the more to guard against such temptations. By all means make but one work of seeking salvation! Make thorough work of it the first time! There are vast disadvantages that they bring themselves under, who have several turns of seeking with great intermissions. By such a course, persons exceedingly wound their own souls, and entangle themselves in many snares. Who are those that commonly meet with so many difficulties, and are so long labouring in darkness and perplexity, but those who have had several turns at seeking salvation; who have one while had convictions, and then have quenched them, and then have set about the work again, and have backslidden again, and have gone on after that manner? The children of Israel would not have been forty years in the wilderness, if they had held their courage, and had gone on as they set out; but they were of an unstable mind, and were for going back again into Egypt.—Otherwise, if they had gone right forward without discouragement, as God would have led them, they would have soon entered and taken possession of Canaan. They had got to the very borders of it when they turned back, but were thirty eight years after that, before they got through the wilderness. Therefore, as you regard the interest of your soul, do not run yourself into a like difficulty, by unsteadiness, intermission, and backsliding; but press right forward, from henceforth, and make but one work of seeking, converting, and pardoning grace, however great and difficult, and long a work that may be.

DISCOURSE III.

RUTH'S RESOLUTION.

RUTH i. 16.

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

THE historical things in this book of Ruth, seem to be inserted in the canon of the Scripture, especially on two accounts:

First, Because Christ was of Ruth's posterity. The Holy Ghost thought fit to take particular notice of that marriage of Boaz with Ruth, whence sprang the Saviour of the world. We may often observe it, that the Holy Spirit who indited the Scriptures, often takes notice of little things, or minute occurences, that do but remotely relate to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Because this history seems to be typical of the calling of the Gentile church, and indeed of the conversion of every believer. Ruth was not originally of Israel, but was a Moabitess, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel: But she forsook her own people, and the idols of the Gentiles, to worship the God of Israel, and to join herself to that people. Herein she seems to be a type of the Gentile church, and also of every sincere convert. Ruth was the remote mother of Christ; he came of her posterity: So the church is Christ's mother, as she is represented, Rev. xii. at the beginning. And

so also is every true Christian his mother. Matth. xii. 50. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Christ is what the soul is in travail with, at the new birth. Ruth forsook all her natural relations, and her own country, the land of her nativity, and all her former possessions there, for the sake of the God of Israel; as every true Christian forsakes all for Christ. Psalm. xlv. 10. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

Naomi was now returning out of the land of Moab, into the land of Israel, with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth; who will represent to us two sorts of professors of religion: Orpah, those who indeed make a fair profession, and seem to set out well, but continue only for a while, and then turn back; Ruth, those who are sound and sincere, and therefore are stedfast and persevering in their way. Naomi, in the preceding verses, represents to her daughters the difficulties of their leaving their own country to go with her. And in this verse may be observed,

1. The remarkable conduct and behaviour of Ruth on this occasion; with what inflexible resolution she cleaves to Naomi, and follows her. When Naomi first arose to return from the country of Moab into the land of Israel, Orpah and Ruth both set out with her; and Naomi exhorts them both to return. And both wept, and seemed as if they could not bear the thoughts of leaving her, and appeared as if they were resolved to go with her. Verse, 10. "And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." Then Naomi says to them again, "Turn again, my daughters, go your way," &c. And then they were greatly affected again, and Orpah returned and went back. Now Ruth's stedfastness in her purpose had a greater trial, but yet is not overcome: "She clave unto her," verse 14. Then Naomi speaks to her again, verse 15. "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law." And then she shews her immoveable resolution in the text and following verse.

2. I would particularly observe that wherein the virtuousness of this her resolution consists, viz. that it was for the sake of the God of Israel, and that she might be one of his people, that she was thus resolved to cleave to Naomi: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." It was for God's sake that she did thus; and therefore her so doing is afterwards

spoken of as a virtuous behaviour in her, chap. ii. 11, 12. "And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father, and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." She left her father and mother, and the land of her nativity, to come and trust under the shadow of God's wings; and she had indeed a full reward given her, as Boaz wished; for besides immediate spiritual blessings to her own soul, and eternal rewards in another world, she was rewarded with plentiful and prosperous outward circumstances in the family of Boaz. And God raised up David and Solomon of her seed, and established the crown of Israel (the people that she chose before her own people) in her posterity; and, which is much more, of her seed he raised up Jesus Christ, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

From the words thus opened, I observe this for the subject of my present discourse:—"When those that we have formerly been conversant with, are turning to God, and joining themselves to his people, it ought to be our firm resolution, that we will not leave them; but that their people shall be our people, and their God our God."

It sometimes happens, that of those who have been conversant one with another—who have dwelt together as neighbours, and have been often together as companions, or united in their relation, and have been together in darkness, bondage, and misery, in the service of Satan—some are enlightened, and have their minds changed, are made to see the great evil of sin, and have their hearts turned to God. They are influenced by the holy Spirit of God, to leave their company that are on Satan's side, and to join themselves with that blessed company that are with Jesus Christ. They are made willing to forsake the tents of wickedness, to dwell in the land of uprightness with the people of God.

And sometimes this proves a final parting or separation between them and those with whom they have been formerly conversant. Though it may be no parting in outward respects, they may still dwell, and converse one with another; yet in other respects, it sets them at a great distance. One is a child of God, and the other his enemy; one is in a miserable, and the other in a happy condition; one is a citizen of the heavenly

Zion, the other is under condemnation to hell. They are no longer together in those respects wherein they used to be together: They used to be of one mind to serve sin, and do Satan's work; now they are of contrary minds. They used to be together in worldliness and sinful vanity; now they are of exceeding different dispositions. They are separated as they are in different kingdoms; the one remains in the kingdom of darkness, the other is translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And sometimes they are finally separated in these respects: while one dwells in the land of Israel, and in the house of God; the other, like Orpah, lives and dies in the land of Moab.

Now it is lamentable, it is awful being parted so. It is doleful, when of those who have formerly been together in sin, some turn to God, and join themselves with his people, that it should prove a *parting* between them and their former companions and acquaintance. It should be our firm and inflexible resolution in such a case, that it shall be no parting, but that we will follow them, that their people shall be our people, and their God our God; and that for the following reasons:

1. Because their *God* is a glorious God. There is none like him, who is infinite in glory and excellency. He is the most high God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. His name is excellent in all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens. Among the gods there is none like unto him; there is none in heaven to be compared to him, nor are there any among the sons of the mighty that can be likened unto him. Their God is the fountain of all good, and an inexhaustible fountain; he is an all-sufficient God, able to protect and defend them, and do all things for them. He is the king of glory, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle: A strong rock, and an high tower. There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth on the heaven in their help, and in his excellency on the sky: The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are everlasting arms. He is a God who hath all things in his hands, and does whatsoever he pleases: he killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up; he maketh poor and maketh rich: The pillars of the earth are the Lord's. Their God is an infinitely holy God; There is none holy as the Lord. And he is infinitely good and merciful. Many that others worship and serve as gods, are cruel beings, spirits that seek the ruin of souls; but this is a God that delighteth in mercy; his grace is infinite, and endures for ever. He is love itself, an infinite fountain and ocean of it.

Such a God is their God! Such is the excellency of Jacob! Such is the God of them who have forsaken their sins and are converted! They have made a wise choice who have chosen this for their God. They have made an happy exchange indeed, that have exchanged sin, and the world, for such a God!

They have an excellent and glorious Saviour, who is the only begotten Son of God; the brightness of his Father's glory; one in whom God from eternity had infinite delight; a Saviour of infinite love; one that has shed his own blood, and made his soul an offering for their sins, and one that is able to save them to the uttermost.

II. Their *people* are an excellent and happy people. God has renewed them, and stamped his own image upon them, and made them partakers of his holiness. They are more excellent than their neighbours, Prov. xii. 26. Yea, they are the excellent of the earth, Psalm xvi. 3. They are lovely in the sight of the angels; and they have their souls adorned with those graces that in the sight of God himself are of great price.

The people of God are the most excellent and happy society in the world. That God whom they have chosen for their God, is their father; he has pardoned all their sins, and they are at peace with him; and he has admitted them to all the privileges of his children. As they have devoted themselves to God, so he has given himself to them. He is become their salvation, and their portion: His power and mercy, and all his attributes, are theirs. They are in a safe state, free from all possibility of perishing: Satan has no power to destroy them. God carries them on eagles wings, far above Satan's reach, and above the reach of all the enemies of their souls. God is with them in this world; they have his gracious presence. God is for them; Who then can be against them? As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about them. God is their shield, and their exceeding great reward; and their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: And they have the divine promise and oath, that in the world to come they shall dwell for ever in the glorious presence of God.

It may well be sufficient to induce us to resolve to cleave to those that forsake their sins and idols to join themselves with this people, that God is with them, Zech. viii. 23, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even

shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." So should persons, as it were, take hold of the skirt of their neighbours and companions that have turned to God, and resolve that they will go with them, because God is with them.

III. *Happiness* is no where else to be had, but in their God, and with their people. There are that are called gods many, and lords many. Some make gods of their pleasures; some chuse Mammon for their god; some make gods of their own supposed excellencies, or the outward advantages they have above their neighbours: some choose one thing for their god, and others another. But men can be happy in no other but the God of Israel: He is the only fountain of happiness. Other gods cannot help in calamity; nor can any of them afford what the poor empty soul stands in need of. Let men adore those other gods never so much, and call upon them never so earnestly, and serve them never so diligently, they will nevertheless remain poor, wretched, unsatisfied, undone creatures. All other people are miserable, but that people whose God is the Lord.—The world is divided into two societies: *The people of God*, the little flock of Jesus Christ, that company that we read of, Rev. xiv. 4. "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins: these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb:" And, *those that belong to the kingdom of darkness*, that are without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. All that are of this latter company are wretched and undone; they are the enemies of God, and under his wrath and condemnation. They are the devil's slaves, that serve him blindfold, and are befooled and ensnared by him, and hurried along in the broad way to eternal perdition.

IV. When those that we have formerly been conversant with are turning to God and to his people, their *example* ought to influence us. Their example should be looked upon as the call of God to us, to do as they have done. God, when he changes the heart of one, calls upon another; especially does he loudly call on those that have been their friends and acquaintance. We have been influenced by their examples in evil; and shall we cease to follow them, when they make the

wisest choice that ever they made, and do the best thing that ever they did! If we have been companions with them in worldliness, in vanity, in unprofitable and sinful conversation, it will be an hard case, if there must be a parting now, because we are not willing to be companions with them in holiness and true happiness. Men are greatly influenced by seeing one anothers prosperity in other things. If those whom they have been much conversant with, grow rich, and obtain any great earthly advantages, it awakens their ambition, and eager desire after the like prosperity: How much more should they be influenced, and stirred up to follow them, and be like them, when they obtain that spiritual and eternal happiness, that is of infinitely more worth, than all the prosperity and glory of this world?

V. Our *resolutions* to cleave to and follow those that are turning to God, and joining themselves to his people, ought to be *fixed* and strong, because of the great difficulty of it. If we will cleave to them, and have their God for our God, and their people for our people, we must mortify and deny all our lusts, and cross every evil appetite and inclination, and for ever part with all sin. But our lusts are many and violent. Sin is naturally exceeding dear to us; to part with it is compared to plucking out our right eyes. Men may refrain from wonted ways of sin for a little while, and may deny their lusts in a partial degree, with less difficulty; but it is heart-rending work, finally to part with all sin, and to give our dearest lusts a bill of divorce, utterly to send them away. But this we must do, if we would follow those that are truly turning to God: Yea, we must not only forsake sin, but must, in a sense, forsake all the world, Luke xiv. 33. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." That is, he must forsake all in his heart, and must come to a thorough disposition and readiness actually to quit all for God, and the glorious spiritual privileges of his people, whenever the case may require it; and that without any prospect of any thing of the like nature, or any worldly thing whatsoever, to make amends for it; and all to go into a strange country, a land that has hitherto been unseen; like Abraham, who being called of God, "went out of his own country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, for a land that God should shew him, not knowing whither he went."

Thus, it was a hard thing for Ruth to forsake her native country, her father and mother, her kindred and acquaintance,

and all the pleasant things she had in the land of Moab, to dwell in the land of Israel, where she never had been. Naomi told her of the difficulties once and again. They were too hard for her sister Orpah; the consideration of them turned her back after she was set out. Her resolution was not firm enough to overcome them. But so firmly resolved was Ruth, that she brake through all; she was stedfast in it, that, let the difficulty be what it would, she would not leave her mother-in-law. So persons had need to be very firm in their resolution to conquer the difficulties that are in the way of cleaving to them who are indeed turning from sin to God.

Our cleaving to them, and having their God for our God, and their people for our people, depends on our resolution and choice; and that in two respects.

1. The firmness of resolution in using means in order to it, is the way to have means effectual. There are means appointed in order to our becoming some of the true Israel, and having their God for our God; and the thorough use of these means is the way to have success; but not a slack or slighty use of them. And that we may be thorough, there is need of strength of resolution, a firm and inflexible disposition, and bent of mind to be universal in the use of means, and to do what we do with our might, and to persevere in it. Matth. xi. 12. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

2. A choosing of their God, and their people, with a full determination, and with the whole soul, is the condition of an union with them. God gives every man his choice in this matter: as Orpah and Ruth had their choice, whether they would go with Naomi into the land of Israel, or stay in the land of Moab. A natural man may chuse deliverance from hell; bu no man doth ever heartily chuse God and Christ, and the sp ritual benefits that Christ has purchased, and the happiness God's people, till he is converted. On the contrary, he is av to them; he has no relish of them; and is wilfully ignora their inestimable worth and value.

Many carnal men seem to chuse these things, but do really; as Orpah seemed at first to chuse to forsake Moal into the land of Israel: But when Naomi came to set her the difficulty of it, she went back; and thereby shew she was not fully determined in her choice, and that h soul was not in it as Ruth's was.

APPLICATION.

The use that I shall make of what has been said, is to move sinners to this resolution, with respect to those amongst us that have lately turned to God, and joined themselves to the flock of Christ. Through the abundant mercy and grace of God to us in this place, it may said of many of you that are in a Christless condition, that you have lately been left by those that were formerly with you in such a state. Some of those with whom you have formerly been conversant, have lately forsaken a life of sin and the service of Satan, and have turned to God, and fled to Christ, and joined themselves to that blessed company that are with him. They formerly were with you in sin and in misery; but now they are with you no more in that state or manner of life. They are changed, and have fled from the wrath to come; They have chosen a life of holiness here, and the enjoyment of God hereafter. They were formerly your associates in bondage, and were with you in Satan's business; but now you have their company no longer in these things. Many of you have seen those you live with, under the same roof, turning from being any longer with you in sin, to be with the people of Jesus Christ. Some of you that are husbands, have had your wives; and some of you that are wives, have had your husbands; some of you that are children, have had your parents; and parents have had your children; many of you have had your brothers and sisters; and many your near neighbours, and acquaintance, and special friends; many of you that are young have had your companions: I say, many of you have had those that you have been thus concerned with, leaving you, forsaking that doleful life, and wretched state in which you still continue. God, of his good pleasure and wonderful grace, hath lately caused in this place multitudes to forsake their old abodes in the land of Moab, and under the gods of Moab, and go into the land of Israel, to put their trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. Though you and they have been nearly related, and have dwelt together, or have been often together and intimately acquainted, they have been taken, and you hitherto left! O let it not be the foundation of a final parting! But earnestly follow them; be firm in your resolution in this matter. Do not as Orpah did, who, though at first she made as though she would follow Naomi, yet when she had the difficulty set

her, went back: But say as Ruth, "I will not leave thee, nor where thou goest, I will go: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Say as she said, and do as she did. Christ is the excellency of their God, and their Saviour, and the happiness of their people, the blessed state that they are in, and the doleful state you are in.

You are *old* sinners, who have lived long in the service of Satan, have lately seen some that have travelled with you in the ways of sin these many years, turning to God. They with you enjoyed great means and advantages, had calls and warnings from you, and with you passed through remarkable times of the pouring out of God's Spirit in this place, and hardened their hearts and stood it out with you, and with you have grown old in sin: yet you have seen some of them turning to God, i. e. you have seen those evidences of it in them, whence you may reasonably judge that it is so. O! let it not be a final parting! You have been thus long together in sin, and under condemnation, let it be your firm resolution, that, if possible, you will be with them still, now they are in a holy and happy state, and that you will follow them into the holy and pleasant land.—You that tell of your having been seeking salvation for many years, (though, without doubt, in a poor dull way, in comparison of what you ought to have done,) have seen some old sinners and old seekers, as you are, obtaining mercy. God has lately roused them from their dulness, and caused them to alter their hand, and put them on more thorough endeavours; and they have now, after so long a time, heard God's voice, and have fled for refuge to the rock of ages. Let this awaken earnestness and resolution in you. Resolve that you will not leave them.

You who are in your *youth*, how many have you seen of your age and standing, that have of late hopefully chosen God for their God, and Christ for their Saviour! You have followed them in sin, and have perhaps followed them into vain company; and will you not now follow them to Christ?—And you who are *children*, know that there have lately been some of your sort who have repented of their sins, loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and trusted in him, and are become God's children, as we have reason to hope: Let it stir you up to resolve to your utmost to seek and cry to God, that you may have the like change made in your hearts, that their people may be your people, and their God your God.

You who are great sinners, who have made yourselves

distinguishingly guilty by the wicked practices you have lived in, know that there are some of your sort who have lately (as we have reason to hope) had their hearts broken for sin, and have forsaken it, and trusted in the blood of Christ for the pardon of it. They have chosen an holy life, and have betaken themselves to the ways of wisdom: Let it excite and encourage you resolutely to cleave to them, and earnestly to follow them.

Let the following things be considered:

1. That your soul is as precious as theirs. It is immortal as theirs is; and stands in as much need of happiness, and can as ill bear eternal misery. You was born in the same miserable condition that they were, having the same wrath of God abiding on you. You must stand before the same Judge; who will be as strict in judgment with you as with them; and your own righteousness will stand you in no more stead before him than theirs; and therefore you stand in as absolute necessity of a Saviour as they. Carnal confidences can no more answer your end than theirs; nor can this world or its enjoyments serve to make you happy without God and Christ, more than them. When the bridegroom comes, the foolish virgins stand in as much need of oil as the wise, Matth. xxv. at the beginning.

2. Unless you follow them in their turning to God, their conversion will be a foundation of an eternal separation between you and them. You will be in different interests, and in exceeding different states, as long as you live; they the children of God, and you the children of Satan; and you will be parted in another world; when you come to die, there will be a vast separation made between you. Luke xvi. 26. "And besides all this between us and you there is a great gulph fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." And you will be parted at the day of judgment. You will be parted at Christ's first appearance in the clouds of heaven. While they are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, to be ever with the Lord, you will remain below, confined to this cursed ground, that is kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. You will appear separated from them, while you stand before the great judgment-seat, they being at the right hand, while you are set at the left. Matth. xxv. 32 33. "And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate

them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." And you shall then appear in exceeding different circumstances: While you stand with devils, in the image and deformity of devils, and in ineffable horror and amazement, they shall appear in glory, sitting on thrones, as assessors with Christ, and as such passing judgment upon you, 1 Cor. vi. 2. And what shame and confusion will then cover you, when so many of your contemporaries, your equals, your neighbours, relations, and companions, shall be honoured, and openly acknowledged, and confessed by the glorious Judge of the universe, and Redeemer of saints, and shall be seen by you sitting with him in such glory. You shall appear to have neglected your salvation, and not to have improved your opportunities, and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, the same person that will then appear as your great judge, and you shall be the subjects of wrath, and, as it were, trodden down in eternal contempt and disgrace! Dan. xii. 2. "Some shall rise to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And what a wide separation will the sentence then passed and executed make between you and them? When you shall be sent away out of the presence of the Judge with indignation and abhorrence, as cursed and loathsome creatures; they shall be sweetly accosted and invited into his glory as his dear friends, and the blessed of his Father! When *you*, with all that vast throng of wicked and accursed men and devils, shall descend with loud lamentings, and horrid shrieks, into that dreadful gulph of fire and brimstone, and shall be swallowed up in that great and everlasting furnace? *they* shall joyfully, and with sweet songs of glory and praise, ascend with Christ, and all that beauteous and blessed company of saints and angels, into eternal felicity, in the glorious presence of God, and the sweet embraces of his love. You and they shall spend eternity in such a separation, and immensely different circumstances! You have been intimately acquainted and nearly related, closely united and mutually conversant in this world; and you have taken delight in each others company! And shall it be—after you have been together a great while, each of you in undoing yourselves, enhancing your guilt, and heaping up wrath—that their so wisely changing their minds and their course, and choosing such happiness for themselves, should now at length be the beginning of such an exceeding and everlasting separation between you and them? How awful will it be to be parted so!

3. Consider the great encouragement that God gives you, earnestly to strive for the same blessing that others have obtained. There is great encouragement in the word of God to sinners to seek salvation, in the revelation we have of the abundant provision made for the salvation even of the chief of sinners, and in the appointment of so many means to be used with and by sinners, in order to their salvation; and by the blessing which God in his word connects with the means of his appointment. There is hence great encouragement for all, at all times, that will be thorough in using of these means. But now God gives extraordinary encouragement in his providence, by pouring out his Spirit so remarkably amongst us, and bringing savingly home to himself all sorts, young and old, rich and poor, wise and unwise, sober and vicious, old self-righteous seekers, and profligate livers: No sort are exempt. There is at this day amongst us the loudest call, and the greatest encouragement, and the widest door opened to sinners, to escape out of a state of sin and condemnation, that perhaps God ever granted in New-England. Who is there that has an immortal soul, so sottish as not to improve such an opportunity, and that will not bestir himself with all his might? How unreasonable is negligence, and how exceeding unseasonable is discouragement, at such a day as this! Will you be so stupid as to neglect your soul now? Will any mortal amongst us be so unreasonable as to lagg behind, or look back in discouragement, when God opens such a door? Let every person be thoroughly awake! Let every one encourage himself now to press forward, and fly for his life!

4. Consider how earnestly desirous they that have obtained are that you should follow them, and that their people should be your people, and their God your God. They desire that you should partake of that great good which God has given them, and that unspeakable and eternal blessedness which he has promised them. They wish and long it. If you do not go with them, and are not still of their company, it will not be for want of their willingness, but your own. That of Moses to Hobab is the language of every true saint of your acquaintance to you. Numb. x. 29. "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." As Moses, when on his journey through the wilderness, following the of cloud and fire, invited Hobab—with whom he had been acquainted in the land of Midian, where Moses had formerly dwelt with him—to go with him and his

people to Canaan, to partake with them in the good that God had promised them; so do those of your friends and acquaintance invite you, out of a land of darkness and wickedness, where they have formerly been with you, to go with them to the heavenly Canaan. The company of saints, the true church of Christ, invite you. The lovely bride calls you to the marriage supper. She hath authority to invite guests to her own wedding; and you ought to look on her invitation and desire, as the call of Christ the bridegroom; for it is the voice of his Spirit in her, Rev. xxii. 17. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Where seems to be a reference to what had been said, chap. xix. 7, 8, 9. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb." It is with respect to this her marriage-supper that she, from the motion of the Spirit of the Lamb in her, says, Come. So that you are invited on all hands; all conspire to call you. God the Father invites you: This is the King who has made a marriage for his Son; and he sends forth his servants, the ministers of the gospel, to invite the guests. And the Son himself invites you: It is he that speaks, Rev. xvii. 17. "And let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him come." He tells us who he is in the foregoing verse, "I Jesus, the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star." And God's ministers invite you, and all the church invites you; and there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God that hour that you accept the invitation.

5. Consider what a doleful company will be left after this extraordinary time of mercy is over. We have reason to think that there will be a number left. We read that when Ezekiel's healing waters increased so abundantly, and the healing effect of them was so very general; yet were certain places, where the waters came, that never were healed. Ezek. xlvii. 9—11. "And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live. And there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed, and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it, from En-gedi, even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets: their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great

sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof, and the marishes thereof, shall not be healed, they shall be given to salt." And even in the apostles' times, when there was such wonderful success of the gospel wherever they came, there were some that did not believe. Acts xiii. 48. "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." And chap. xxviii. 24. "And some believed, and some believed not." So we have no reason to expect but there will be some left amongst us. It is to be hoped it will be but a small company: But what a doleful company will it be! How darkly and awfully will it look upon them! If you shall be of that company, how well may your friends and relations lament over you, and bemoan your dark and dangerous circumstances! If you would not be one of them, make haste, delay not, and look not behind you. Shall all sorts obtain, shall every one press into the kingdom of God, while you stay loitering behind in a doleful undone condition? Shall every one take heaven, while you remain with no other portion but this world? Now take up that resolution, that if it be possible you will cleave to them that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them. Count the cost of a thorough, violent, and perpetual pursuit of salvation, and forsake all, as Ruth forsook her own country, and all her pleasant enjoyments in it. Do not do as Orpah did; who set out, and then was discouraged, and went back: but hold out with Ruth through all discouragement and opposition. When you consider others that have chosen the better part, let that resolution be ever firm with you: "Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

DISCOURSE IV.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN THE DAMNATION OF SINNERS.

ROM. iii. 19.

—That every mouth may be stopped.—

THE main subject of the doctrinal part of this epistle, is the free grace of God in the salvation of men by Jesus Christ; especially as it appears in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And the more clearly to evince this doctrine, and shew the reason of it, the apostle, in the first place, establishes that point, that no flesh living can be justified by the deeds of the law. And to prove it, he is very large and particular in shewing, that all mankind, not only the Gentiles but Jews, are under sin, and so under the condemnation of the law; which is what he insists upon from the beginning of the epistle to this place. He first begins with the Gentiles; and in the first chapter shews that they are under sin, by setting forth the exceeding corruptions and horrid wickedness that overspread the Gentile world: And then through the second chapter, and the former part of this third chapter, to the text and following verse, he shews the same of the Jews, that they also are in the same circumstances with the Gentiles in this regard. They had an high thought of themselves, because they were God's covenant people, and circumcised, and the children of Abraham. They despised the Gentiles as polluted, condemned, and accursed; but looked on themselves, on account of their external privileges, and ceremonial and moral righteousness, as a pure and holy people, and the children of God; as the apostle observes in the second chapter. It was therefore strange doctrine to them, that they also were unclean and guilty in God's sight, and under the condemnation and curse of the law. The apostle therefore, on account of their strong prejudices agains such doctrine, the more particularly insists upon it, and shews that they

are no better than the Gentiles; as in the 9th verse of this chapter, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." And, to convince them of it, he produces certain passages out of their own law, or the Old Testament, (to whose authority they pretended a great regard,) from the 9th verse to our text. And it may be observed, that the apostle, *first*, cites certain passages to prove that all mankind are *corrupt*, (ver. 10—12.) "As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God: They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one." *Secondly*, The passages he cites next, are to prove, that not only are all corrupt, but each one *wholly* corrupt, as it were all over unclean, from the crown of the head to the soles of his feet; and therefore several particular parts of the body are mentioned, the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet, (ver. 13—15:) "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood." And, *Thirdly*, He quotes other passages to shew, that each one is not only all over corrupt, but corrupt to a desperate degree, (ver. 16—18.) by affirming the most pernicious tendency of their wickedness; "Destruction and misery are in their ways." And then by denying all goodness or godliness in them; "And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." And then, lest the Jews should think these passages of their law do not concern them, and that only the Gentiles are intended in them, the apostle shews in the text, not only that they are not exempt, but that they especially must be understood: "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." By those that are *under* the law are meant the Jews; and the Gentiles by those that are *without* law; as appears by the 12th verse of the preceding chapter. There is special reason to understand the law, as speaking to and of them, to whom it was immediately given. And therefore the Jews would be unreasonable in exempting themselves. And if we examine the places of the Old Testament whence these passages are taken, we shall see plainly that special respect is had to the wickedness of the people of that nation, in every one of them. So that the law shuts all up in universal and desperate wickedness, *that every mouth may be stopped*; the mouths of the Jews, as well as of the Gentiles, notwithstanding all those privileges by which they were distinguished from the Gentiles.

The things that the law says, are sufficient to stop the mouths of all mankind, in two respects.

1. To stop them from boasting of their righteousness, as the Jews were wont to do; as the apostle observes in the 23d verse of the preceding chapter.—That the apostle has respect to stopping their mouths in this respect, appears by the 27th verse of the context, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." The law stops our mouths from making any plea for life, or the favour of God, or any positive good, from our own righteousness.

2. To stop them from making any excuse for ourselves, or objection against the execution of the sentence of the law, or the infliction of the punishment that it threatens. That this is intended, appears by the words immediately following, "That all the world may become guilty before God." That is, that they may appear to be guilty, and stand convicted before God, and justly liable to the condemnation of his law, as guilty of death, according to the Jewish way of speaking.

And thus the apostle proves, that no flesh can be justified in God's sight by the deeds of the law; as he draws the conclusion in the following verse; and so prepares the way for establishing the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he proceeds to do in the following part of the chapter, and of the epistle.

DOCTRINE.

"It is just with God eternally to cast off and destroy sinners."——For this is the punishment which the law condemns to.—The truth of this doctrine may appear by the joint consideration of two things, viz. Man's *sinfulness*, and God's *sovereignty*.

I. It appears from the consideration of man's sinfulness. And that whether we consider the infinitely evil nature of all sin, or how much sin men are guilty of.

1. If we consider the infinite evil and heinousness of sin in general, it is not unjust in God to inflict what punishment is deserved; because the very notion of deserving any punishment is, that it may be justly inflicted. A deserved punishment and a just punishment are the same thing. To say that one *deserves* such a punishment, and yet to say that he does not *justly* deserve it, is a contradiction; and if he justly deserves it, then it may be justly *inflicted*.

Every crime or fault deserves a greater or less punishment, in proportion as the crime itself is greater or less. If any fault de-

serves punishment, then so much the greater the fault, so much the greater is the punishment deserved. The faulty nature of any thing is the formal ground and reason of its desert of punishment; and therefore the more any thing hath of this nature, the more punishment it deserves. And therefore the terribleness of the degree of punishment, let it be never so terible, is no argument against the justice of it, if the proportion does but hold between the heinousness of the crime and the dreadfulness of the punishment; so that if there be any such thing as a fault infinitely heinous, it will follow that it is just to inflict a punishment for it that is infinitely dreadful.

A crime is more or less heinous, according as we are under greater or less *obligations* to the contrary. This is self-evident; because it is herein that the criminalness or faultiness of any thing consists, that it is contrary to what we are obliged or bound to, or what *ought* to be in us. So the faultiness of one being hating another, is in proportion to his obligation to love him. The crime of one being despising and casting contempt on another, is proportionably more or less heinous, as he was under greater or less obligations to honour him. The fault of disobeying another, is greater or less, as any one is under greater or less obligations to obey him. And therefore if there be any being that we are under infinite obligations to love, and honour, and obey, the contrary towards him must be infinitely faulty.

Our obligation to love, honour, and obey any being, is in proportion to his loveliness, honourableness, and authority; for that is the very meaning of the words. When we say any one is very lovely, it is the same as to say, that he is one very much to be loved. Or if we say such a one is more honourable than another, the meaning of the words is, that he is one that we are more obliged to honour. If we say any one has great authority over us, it is the same as to say, that he has great right to our subjection and obedience.

But God is a being *infinitely* lovely, because he hath infinite excellency and beauty. To have infinite excellency and beauty, is the same thing as to have infinite loveliness. He is a Being of infinite greatness, majesty, and glory; and therefore he is infinitely honourable. He is infinitely exalted above the greatest potentates of the earth, and highest angels in heaven; and therefore he is infinitely more honourable than they. His authority over us is infinite; and the ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong; for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed himself, and we have an absolute, universal, and infinite dependence upon him.

So that sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous, and so deserving of infinite punishment.—Nothing is more agreeable to the common sense of mankind, than that sins committed against any one, must be proportionably heinous to the dignity of the being offended and abused; as it is also agreeable to the word of God, 1 Sam. ii. 25. "If one man sin against another, the Judge shall judge him;" (i. e. shall judge him, and inflict a finite punishment, such as finite judges can inflict); "but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?" This was the aggravation of sin that made Joseph afraid of it, Gen. xxxix. 9. "How shall I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This was the aggravation of David's sin, in comparison of which he esteemed all others as nothing, because they were infinitely exceeded by it. Psalm li. 4. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned."—The *eternity* of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite: and it renders it no more than infinite; and therefore renders no more than proportionable to the heinousness of what they are guilty of.

If there be *any* evil or faultiness in sin against God, there is certainly *infinite* evil: For if it be any fault at all, it has an infinite aggravation, viz. that it is against an infinite object. If it be ever so small upon other accounts, yet if it be any thing, it has one infinite dimension; and so is an infinite evil. Which may be illustrated by this: If we suppose a thing to have infinite length, but no breadth and thickness, (a mere mathematical line) it is nothing: but if it have *any* breadth and thickness, though never so small, and infinite length, the quantity of it is infinite; it exceeds the quantity of any thing, however broad, thick and long, wherein these dimensions are all finite.

So that the objections made against the *infinite* punishment of sin, from the necessity, or rather previous certainty of the futurition of sin, arising from the unavoidable original corruption of nature, if they argue any thing, argue against *any* faultiness at all: For if this necessity or certainty leaves *any* evil at all in sin, that fault must be *infinite* by reason of the infinite object.

But every such objector as would argue from hence, that there is no fault at all in sin, confutes himself and shews his own insincerity in his objection. For at the same time that he objects, that men's acts are necessary, and that this kind of necessity is inconsistent with faultiness in the act, his own practice shews that he does not believe what he objects to be true: Otherwise why does he at all *blame* men? Or why are such persons at all dis-

pleased with men, for abusive, injurious, and ungrateful acts towards them? Whatever they pretend, by this they shew that indeed they do believe that there is no necessity in men's acts that is inconsistent with blame. And if their objection be this, that this previous certainty is by God's own ordering, and that were God orders an antecedent certainty of acts, he transfers all the fault from the actor on himself; their practice shews, that at the same time they do not believe this, but fully believe the contrary: For when they are abused by men, they are displeased with *men*, and not with *God* only.

The light of nature teaches all mankind, that when an injury is *voluntary*, it is faulty, without any consideration of what there might be previously to determine the futurition of that evil act of the will. And it really teaches this as much to those that object and cavil most as to others; as their universal practice shews. By which it appears, that such objections are insincere and perverse. Men will mention others' corrupt nature when they are injured, as a thing that aggravates their crime, and that wherein their faultiness partly consists. How common is it for persons, when they look on themselves greatly injured by another, to inveigh against him, and aggravate his baseness, by saying, "He is a man of a most perverse spirit: He is naturally of a selfish, niggardly, or proud and haughty temper: He is one of a base and vile disposition." And yet men's natural corrupt dispositions are mentioned as an excuse for them, with respect to their sins against God, as if they rendered them blameless.

2. That it is just with God eternally to cast off wicked men, may more abundantly appear, if we consider how much sin they are guilty of. From what has been already said, it appears, that if men were guilty of sin but in one particular, that is sufficient ground of their eternal rejection and condemnation. If they are *sinners*, that is enough. Merely this, might be sufficient to keep them from ever lifting up their heads, and cause them to smite on their breasts, with the publican that cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But sinful men are full of sin; principles and acts of sin: Their guilt is like great mountains, heaped one upon another, till the pile is grown up to heaven. They are totally corrupt, in every part, in all their faculties; in all the principles of their nature, their understandings and wills; and in all their dispositions and affections. Their heads, their hearts, are totally depraved; all the members of their bodies are only instruments of sin; and all their senses, seeing, hearing, tasting, &c. are only inlets and

outlets of sin, channels of corruption. There is nothing but sin, no good at all. Rom. vii. 18. "In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing" There is all manner of wickedness There are the seeds of the greatest and blackest crimes. There are principles of all sorts of wickedness against men; and there is all wickedness against God. There is pride; there is enmity; there is contempt; there is quarrelling; there is Atheism; there is blasphemy. There are these things in exceeding strength; the heart is under the power of them, is sold under sin, and is a perfect slave to it There is hardheartedness, hardness greater than that of a rock, or an adamant-stone. There is obstinacy and perverseness, incorrigibleness and inflexibleness in sin, that will not be overcome by threatenings or promises, by awakenings or encouragements, by judgments or mercies, neither by that which is terrifying, nor that which is winning. The very blood of God our Saviour will not win the heart of a wicked man.

And there is actual wickednesses without number or measure. There are breaches of every command, in thought, word, and deed: a life full of sin; days and nights filled up with sin; mercies abused, and frowns despised; mercy and justice, and all the divine perfections, trampled on; and the honour of each person in the Trinity trod in the dirt. Now if one sinful word or thought has so much evil in it, as to deserve eternal destruction, how do they deserve to be eternally cast off and destroyed, that are guilty of so much sin!

II. If with man's sinfulness, we consider God's *sovereignty*, it may serve further to clear God's justice in the eternal rejection and condemnation of sinners, from men's cavils and objections. I shall not now pretend to determine precisely, what things are, and what things are not, proper acts and exercises of God's holy sovereignty; but only, that God's sovereignty extends to the following things.

1. That such is God's sovereign power and right, that he is originally under no *obligation* to keep men from sinning; but may in his providence permit and *leave* them to sin. He was not obliged to keep either angels or men from falling. It is *unreasonable* to suppose, that God should be obliged, if he makes a reasonable creature capable of knowing his will, and receiving a law from him, and being subject to his moral government, at the same time to make it *impossible* for him to sin, or break his law. For if God be obliged to this, it destroys

all use of any commands, laws, promises or threatenings, and the very notion of any moral government of God over those reasonable creatures. For to what purpose would it be, for God to give such and such laws, and declare his holy will to a creature, and annex promises and threatenings to move him to his duty, and make him careful to perform it, if the creature at the same time has this to think of, that God is *obliged* to make it *impossible* for him to break his laws? How can God's threatenings move to care or watchfulness, when, at the same time, God is obliged to render it impossible that he should be exposed to the threatenings? Or, to what purpose is it for God to give a law at all? For according to this supposition, it is God, and not the creature, that is under law. It is the lawgiver's care, and not the subject's, to see that his law is obeyed; and this care is what the lawgiver is absolutely obliged to! If God be *obliged* never to *permit* a creature to fall, there is an end of all divine laws, or government, or authority of God over the creature; there can be no manner of use of these things.

God *may permit* sin, though the being of sin will *certainly* ensue on that permission: And so, by permission, he may dispose and order the event. If there were any such thing as chance, or mere contingence, and the very notion of it did not carry a gross absurdity, (as might easily be shown that it does), it would have been very unfit that God should have left it to mere chance, whether man should fall or no. For chance, if there should be any such thing, is undesigning and blind. And certainly it is more fit that an event of so great importance, and which is attended with such an infinite train of great consequences, should be disposed and ordered by infinite *wisdom*, than that it should be left to blind *chance*.

If it be said, that God need not have interposed to render it impossible for man to sin, and yet not leave it to mere contingence or blind chance neither; but might have left it with man's *free will*, to determine whether to sin or no: I answer, if God did leave it to man's free will, without any *sort of disposal, or ordering* [or rather, *adequate cause*] in the case, whence it should be previously *certain* how that free will should determine, then still that first determination of the will must be merely contingent or by chance. It could not have any antecedent act of the will to determine it; for I speak now of the very first act or motion of the will, respecting the affair that may be looked upon as the prime ground and highest source of the event. To suppose this to be determined by a foregoing

act is a contradiction. God's disposing this determination of the will by his *permission*, does not at all infringe the liberty of the creature. It is in no respect any more inconsistent with liberty, than mere chance or contingence. For if the determination of the will be from blind, undesigning chance, it is no more from the agent himself, or from the will itself, than if we suppose, in the case, a wise, divine disposal by permission.

2. It was fit that it should be at the ordering of the divine wisdom and good pleasure, whether every particular man should stand for himself, or whether the first father of mankind should be appointed as the moral and federal head and representative of the rest. If God has not liberty in this matter to determine either of these two as he pleases, it must be because determining that the first father of men should represent the rest, and not that every one should stand for himself, is *injurious* to mankind. For if it be not injurious, how is it unjust? But it is not injurious to mankind; for there is nothing in the nature of the case itself, that makes it better that each man should stand for himself, than that all should be represented by their common father; as the least reflection or consideration will convince any one. And if there be nothing in the nature of the thing that makes the former better for mankind than the latter, then it will follow, that they are not hurt in God's chusing and appointing the latter, rather than the former; or, which is the same thing, that it is not injurious to mankind.

3. When men are fallen, and become sinful, God by his sovereignty has a right to determine about their redemption as he pleases. He has a right to determine whether he will redeem any, or not. He might, if he had pleased, have left all to perish, or might have redeemed all. Or, he may redeem some, and leave others; and if he doth so, he may take whom he pleases, and leave whom he pleases. To suppose that all have forfeited his favour, and deserved to perish, and to suppose that he may not leave any one individual of them to perish, implies a contradiction; because it supposes that such a one has a claim to God's favour, and is not justly liable to perish; which is contrary to the supposition.

It is meet that God should order all these things according to his own pleasure. By reason of his greatness and glory, by which he is infinitely above all, he is worthy to be sovereign, and that his pleasure should in all things take place. He is worthy that he should make himself his end, and that he should

make nothing but his own wisdom his rule in pursuing that end, without asking leave or counsel of any, and without giving account of any of his matters. It is fit that he who is absolutely perfect, and infinitely wise, and the Fountainof all wisdom, should determine every thing [that he effects] by his own will, even things of the greatest importance. It is meet that he should be thus sovereign, because he is the first being, the eternal being, whence all other beings are. He is the creator of all things; and all are absolutely and universally dependant on him; and therefore it is meet that he should act as the sovereign possessor of heaven and earth.

APPLICATION.

In the improvement of this doctrine, I would chiefly direct myself to sinners who are afraid of damnation, in a use of conviction. This may be matter of conviction to you, that it would be just and righteous with God eternally to reject and destroy you. This is what you are in danger of. You who are a Christless sinner, are a poor condemned creature: God's wrath still abides upon you; and the sentence of condemnation lies upon you. You are in God's hands, and it is uncertain what he will do with you. You are afraid what will become of you. You are afraid that it will be your portion to suffer eternal burnings; and your fears are not without grounds; you have reason to tremble every moment. But be you never so much afraid of it, let eternal damnation be never so dreadful, yet it is just. God may nevertheless do it, and be righteous, and holy, and glorious. Though eternal damnation be what you cannot bear, and how much soever your heart shrinks at the thoughts of it, yet God's justice may be glorious in it. The dreadfulness of the thing on your part, and the greatness of your dread of it, do not render it the less righteous on God's part. If you think otherwise, it is a sign that you do not see yourself, that you are not sensible what sin is, nor how much of it you have been guilty of. Therefore for your conviction, be directed,

First, To look over your past life: inquire at the mouth of conscience, and hear what that has to testify concerning it. Consider what you are, what light you have had, and what means you have lived under: And yet how you have behaved yourself! What have those many days and nights you have lived been filled up with? How have those years that have rolled over your heads, one after another, been spent? What has the sun shone

upon you for, from day to day, while you have improved his light to serve Satan by it? What has God kept your breath in your nostrils for, and given you meat and drink, that you have spent your life and strength, supported by them, in opposing God, and rebellion against him?

How *many sorts* of wickedness have you been guilty of? How manifold have been the abominations of your life? What profaneness and contempt of God has been exercised by you? How little regard have you had to the Scriptures, to the word preached, to Sabbaths, and sacraments? How profanely have you talked, many of you, about those things that are holy? After what manner have many of you kept God's holy day, not regarding the holiness of the time, nor caring what you thought of in it? Yea, you have not only spent the time in worldly, vain, and unprofitable thoughts, but immoral thoughts; pleasing yourself with the reflection on past acts of wickedness, and in contriving new acts. Have not you spent much holy time in gratifying your lusts in your imaginations; yea, not only holy time, but the very time of God's public worship, when you have appeared in God's more immediate presence? How have you not only not attended to the worship, but have in the mean time been feasting your lusts, and wallowing yourself in abominable uncleanness? How many Sabbaths have you spent, one after another, in a most wretched manner? Some of you not only in worldly and wicked thoughts, but also a very wicked outward behaviour? When you on Sabbath-days have got along with your wicked companions, how has holy time been treated among you! What kind of conversation has there been! Yea, how have some of you, by a very indecent carriage, openly dishonoured and cast contempt on the sacred services of God's house, and holy day! And what you have done some of you alone, what wicked practices there have been in secret, even in holy time, God and your own consciences know.

And how have you behaved yourself in the time of family prayer! And what a trade have many of you made of absenting yourselves from the worship of the families you belong to, for the sake of vain company! And how have you continued in the neglect of secret prayer! therein wilfully living in a known sin, going abreast against as plain a command as any in the Bible! Have you not been one that has cast off fear, and restrained prayer before God?

What wicked carriage have some of you been guilty of towards your parents! How far have you been from paying that honour to them which God has required! Have you not even

harboured ill-will and malice towards them? And when they have displeased you, have wished evil to them? Yea, and shown your vile spirit in your behaviour? and it is well if you have not mocked them behind their backs; and, like the accursed Ham and Canaan, as it were, derided your parents' nakedness instead of covering it, and hiding your eyes from it. Have not some of you often disobeyed your parents, yea, and refused to be subject to them? Is it not a wonder of mercy and forbearance, that the proverb has not before now been accomplished on you, Prov. xxx. 17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

What revenge and malice have you been guilty of towards your neighbours? How have you indulged this spirit of the devil, hating others, and wishing evil to them, rejoicing when evil befel them, and grieving at others' prosperity, and lived in such a way for a long time! Have not some of you allowed a passionate furious spirit, and behaved yourselves in your anger more like wild beasts than like Christians!

What covetousness has been in many of you? Such has been your inordinate love of the world, and care about the things of it, that it has taken up your heart; you have allowed no room for God and religion; you have minded the world more than your eternal salvation. For the vanities of the world you have neglected reading, praying, and meditation; for the things of the world you have broken the Sabbath; for the world you have spent a great deal of your time in quarrelling. For the world you have envied and hated your neighbour; for the world you have cast God, and Christ, and heaven, behind your back: for the world you have sold your own soul. You have as it were drowned your soul in worldly cares and desires; you have been a mere earth-worm, that is never in its element but when grovelling and buried in the earth.

How much of a spirit of *pride* has appeared in you, which is in a peculiar manner the spirit and condemnation of the devil! How have some of you vaunted yourselves in your apparel! Others in their riches! Others in their knowledge and abilities! How has it galled you to see others above you! How much has it gone against the grain for you to give others their due honour! And how have you shown your pride by setting up your wills in opposing others, and stirring up and promoting division, and a party spirit in public affairs.

How *sensual* have you been! Are there not some here that have debased themselves below the dignity of human nature, by

wallowing in sensual filthiness, as swine in the mire, or as filthy vermin feeding with delight on rotten carrion? What intemperance have some of you been guilty of! How much of your precious time have you spent away at the tavern, and in drinking companies, when you ought to have been at home seeking God and your salvation in your families and closets!

And what abominable *lasciviousness* have some of you been guilty of! How have you indulged yourself from day to day, and from night to night, in ill manner of unclean imaginations! Has not your soul been filled with them, till it has become an hold of foul spirits, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird? What foul mouthed persons have some of you been, often in lewd and lascivious talk and unclean songs, wherein were things not fit to be spoken! And such company, where such conversation has been carried on, has been your delight. And with what unclean acts and practices have you defiled yourself! God and your own conciences know what abominable lasciviousness you have practised in things not fit to be named, when you have been alone; when you ought to have been reading, or meditating, or on your knees before God in secret prayer. And how have you corrupted others, as well as polluted yourselves! What vile uncleanness have you practiced in company! What abominations have you been guilty of in the dark! Such as the apostle doubtless had respect to in Eph. v. 12. "For it is a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret." Some of you have corrupted others, and done what in you lay to undo their souls, (if you have not actually done it); and by your vile practices and example have made room for Satan, invited his presence, and established his interest, in the town where you have lived.

What *lying* have some of you been guilty of, especially in your childhood! And have not your heart and lips often disagreed since you came to riper years? What fraud, and deceit, and unfaithfulness, have many of you practised in your own dealings with your neighbours, of which your own heart is conscious, if you have not been noted by others.

And how have some of you behaved yourselves in your *family* relations! How have you neglected your children's souls! And not only so, but have corrupted their minds by your bad examples; and instead of training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, have rather brought them up in the devil's service!

How have some of you attended that sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper without any manner of serious preparation,

and in a careless slighty frame of spirits, and chiefly to comply with custom! Have you not ventured to put the sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ into your mouth, while at the same time you lived in ways of known sins, and intended no other than still to go on in the same wicked practices? And, it may be, have sat at the Lord's table with rancour in your heart against some of your brethren that you have sat therewith. You have come even to that holy feast of love among God's children, with the leaven of malice and envy in your heart; and so have eat and drank judgment to yourself.

What stupidity and sottishness has attended your course of wickedness; which has appeared in your obstinacy under awakening dispensations of God's word and providence. And how have some of you backslidden after you have set out in religion, and quenched God's Spirit after he had been striving with you! And what unsteadiness, and slothfulness, and long misimprovement of God's strivings with you, have you been chargeable with!

Now, can you think when you have thus behaved yourself, that God is *obliged* to shew you mercy? Are you not after all this ashamed to talk of its being hard with God to cast you off? Does it become one who has lived such a life to open his mouth to excuse himself, to object against God's justice in his condemnation, or to complain of it as hard in God not to give him converting and pardoning grace, and make him his child, and bestow on him eternal life! Or to talk of his duties and great pains in religion, as if such performances were worthy to be accepted, and to draw God's heart to such a creature! If this has been your manner, does it not shew how little you have considered yourself, and how little a sense you have had of your own sinfulness?

Secondly, Be directed to consider, if God should eternally reject and destroy you, what an agreeableness and exact mutual answerableness there would be between God so dealing with you, and your spirit and behaviour. There would not only be an equality, but a similitude. God declares, that his dealings with men shall be suitable to their disposition and practice. Psalm xviii. 25, 26. "With the merciful man, thou wilt shew thyself merciful: With an upright man, thou wilt shew thyself upright: With the pure, thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward, thou wilt shew thyself froward." How much soever you dread damnation, and are affrighted and concerned at the thoughts of it; yet if God should

indeed eternally damn you, you would be met with but in your own way; you would be dealt with exactly according to your own dealing. Surely it is but fair that you should be made to buy in the same measure in which you sell.

Here I would particularly shew, 1. That if God should eternally destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of *God*. 2. That it would be agreeable to your treatment of Jesus *Christ*. 3. That it would be agreeable to your behaviour towards your *neighbours*. 4. That it would be according to your own foolish behaviour towards *yourself*.

I. If God should for ever cast you off, it would be exactly agreeable to your treatment of *him*. That you may be sensible of this, consider,

1. You never have exercised the least degree of love to God; and therefore it would be agreeable to your treatment of him if he should never express any love to you. When God converts and saves a sinner, it is a wonderful and unspeakable manifestation of divine love. When a poor lost soul is brought home to Christ, and has all his sins forgiven him, and is made a child of God, it will take up a whole eternity to express and declare the greatness of that love. And why should God be *obliged* to express such wonderful love to you, who never exercised the least degree of love to him in all your life? You never have loved God, who is infinitely glorious and lovely; and why then is God under *obligation* to love you, who are all over deformed and loathsome as a filthy worm, or rather a hateful viper? You have no benevolence in your heart towards God; you never rejoiced in God's happiness; if he had been miserable, and that had been possible, you would have liked it as well as if he were happy; you would not have cared how miserable he was, nor mourned for it, any more than you now do for the devil's being miserable. And why then should God be looked upon as obliged to take so much care for your happiness, as to do such great things for it, as he doth for those that are saved? Or why should God be called hard, in case he should not be careful to save you from misery? You care not what becomes of God's glory; you are not distressed how much soever his honour seems to suffer in the world: And why should God care any more for your welfare? Has it not been so, that if you could but promote your private interest, and gratify your own lusts, you cared not how much the glory of God suffered? And why may not God advance his own glory

in the ruin of your welfare, not caring how much your interest suffers by it? You never so much as stirred one step, sincerely making the glory of God your end, or acting from real respect to him: And why then is it hard if God do not do such great things for you, as the changing of your nature, raising you from spiritual death to life, conquering the powers of darkness for you, translating you out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, delivering you from eternal misery, and bestowing upon you eternal glory? You were not willing to deny yourself for God; you never cared to put yourself out of your way for Christ: Whenever any thing cross or difficult came in your way, that the glory of God was concerned in, it has been your manner to shun it, and excuse yourself from it. You did not care to hurt yourself for Christ, whom you did not see worthy of it: And why then must it be looked upon as a hard and cruel thing, if Christ has not been pleased to spill his blood and be tormented to death for such a sinner.

2. You have slighted God; and why then may not God justly slight you? When sinners are sensible in some measure of their misery, they are ready to think it hard that God will take no more notice of them; that he will see them in such a lamentable distressed condition, beholding their burdens and tears, and seem to slight it, and manifest no pity to them. Their souls they think are precious: it would be a dreadful thing if they should perish, and burn in hell for ever. They do not see through it, that God should make so light of their salvation. But then, ought they not to consider, that as their souls are precious, so is God's honour precious? The honour of the infinite God, the great King of heaven and earth, is a thing of as great importance, (and surely may justly be so esteemed by God), as the happiness of you, a poor little worm. But yet you have slighted that honour of God, and valued it no more than the dirt under your feet. You have been told that such and such things were contrary to the will of a holy God, and against his honour; but you cared not for that. God called upon you, and exhorted you to be more tender of his honour; but you went on without regarding him. Thus have you slighted God! And yet, is it hard that God should slight you? Are you more honourable than God, that he must be obliged to make much of you, how light soever you make of him and his glory?

And you have not only slighted God in time past, but you slight him still. You indeed now make a pretence and shew

of honouring him in your prayers, and attendance on other external duties, and by sober countenance, and seeming devoutness in your words and behaviour; but it is all mere dissembling. That downcast look and seeming reverence, is not from any honour you have to God in your heart, though you would have God take it so. You who have not believed in Christ, have not the least jot of honour to God; that shew of it is merely forced, and what you are driven to by fear, like those mentioned in Psalm lxvi. 3. "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves to thee." In the original it is, "shall lie unto thee;" that is, yield feigned submission, and dissemble respect and honour to thee. There is a rod held over you that makes you seem to pay such respect to God. This religion and devotion, even the very appearance of it, would soon be gone, and all vanish away, if that were removed. Sometimes it may be you weep in your prayers, and in your hearing sermons, and hope God will take notice of it, and take it for some honour; but he sees it to be all hypocrisy. You weep for yourself; you are afraid of hell; and do you think that that is worthy of God to take much notice of you, because you can cry when you are in danger of being damned; when at the same time you indeed care nothing for God's honour.

Seeing you thus disregard so great a God, is it a heinous thing for God to slight you, a little, wretched, despicable creature; a worm, a mere nothing, and less than nothing; a vile insect, that has risen up in contempt against the Majesty of heaven and earth?

3. Why should God be looked upon as obliged to bestow salvation upon you, when you have been so ungrateful for the mercies he has bestowed upon you already? God has tried you with a great deal of kindness, and he never has sincerely been thanked by you for any of it. God has watched over you, and preserved you, and provided for you, and followed you with mercy all your days; and yet you have continued sinning against him. He has given you food and raiment, but you have improved both in the service of sin. He has preserved you while you slept; but when you arose, it was to return to the old trade of sinning. God, notwithstanding this ingratitude, has still continued his mercy; but his kindness has never won your heart, or brought you to a more grateful behaviour towards him. It may be you have received many remarkable mercies, recoveries from sickness, or preservations of your life when exposed by accidents, when if you had died, you would

have gone directly to hell: but you never had any true thankfulness for any of these mercies. God has kept you out of hell, and continued your day of grace, and the offers of salvation, so long a time; while you did not regard your own salvation so much as in secret to ask God for it. And now God has greatly added to his mercy to you, by giving you the strivings of his Spirit, whereby a most precious opportunity for your salvation is in your hands. But what thanks has God received for it? What kind of returns have you made for all this kindness? As God has multiplied mercies, so have you multiplied provocations.

And yet now are you ready to quarrel for mercy, and to find fault with God, not only that he does not bestow more mercy, but to contend with him, because he does not bestow infinite mercy upon you, heaven with all it contains, and even himself, for your eternal portion. What ideas have you of yourself, that you think God is *obliged* to do so much for you, though you treat him ever so ungratefully for his kindness wherewith you have been followed all the days of your life.

4. You have voluntarily chosen to be with Satan in his enmity and opposition to God; how justly therefore might you be with him in his punishment? You did not chuse to be on God's side, but rather chose to side with the devil, and have obstinately continued in it, against God's often repeated calls and counsels. You have chosen rather to hearken to Satan than to God, and would be with him in his work. You have given yourself up to him, to be subject to his power and government, in opposition to God: How justly therefore may God also give you up to him, and leave you in his power, to accomplish your ruin? Seeing you have yielded yourself to his will, to do as he would have you, surely God may leave you in his hands to execute his will upon you. If men will be with God's enemy, and on his side, why is God obliged to redeem them out of his hands, when they have done his work? Doubtless you would be glad to serve the devil, and be God's enemy while you live, and then to have God your friend, and deliver you from the devil, when you come to die. But will God be unjust if he deals otherwise by you? No surely! It will be altogether and perfectly just, that you should have your portion with him with whom you have chosen to work; and that you should be in his possession to whose dominion you have yielded yourself; and if you cry to God for deliverance, he may most justly give you that answer, Judges, x. 14. "Go to the gods which you have chosen."

5. Consider how often you have refused to hear God's calls to you, and how just it would therefore be, if he should refuse to hear you when you call upon him. You are ready, it may be, to complain that you have often prayed, and earnestly begged of God to shew you mercy, and yet have no answer of prayer: One says, I have been constant in prayer for so many years, and God has not heard me. Another says, I have done what I can; I have prayed as earnestly as I am able; I do not see how I can do more; and it will seem hard if after all I am denied. But do you consider how often God has called, and you have denied him? God has called earnestly and for a long time; he has called, and called again in his word, and in his providence, and you have refused. You was not uneasy for fear you should not show regard enough to his calls. You let him call as loud, and as long as he would; for your part, you had no leisure to attend to what he said; you had other business to mind; you had these and those lusts to gratify and please, and worldly concerns to attend; you could not afford to stand considering of what God had to say to you. When the ministers of Christ have stood and pleaded with you, in his name, Sabbath after Sabbath, and have even spent their strength in it, how little was you moved! It did not alter you, but you went on still as you used to do; when you went away, you returned again to your sins, to your lasciviousness, to your vain mirth, to your covetousness, to your intemperance, and that has been the language of your heart and practice. Exod. v. 2. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Was it no crime for you to refuse to hear when God called? And yet is it now very hard that God does not hear your earnest calls, and that though your calling on God be not from any respect to him, but merely from self-love? The devil would beg as earnestly as you, if he had any hope to get salvation by it, and a thousand times as earnestly, and yet be as much of a devil as he is now. Are your calls more worthy to be heard than God's? Or is God more obliged to regard what you say to him, than you to regard his commands, counsels, and invitations to you? What can be more justice than this, Prov. i. 24, &c. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

6. Have you not taken encouragement to sin against God, on that very presumption, that God would show you mercy when you sought it? And may not God justly refuse you that mercy that you have so presumed upon? You have flattered yourself, that though you did so, yet God would shew you mercy when you cried earnestly to him for it: How righteous therefore would it be in God, to disappoint such a wicked presumption? it was upon that very hope that you dared to affront the majesty of heaven so dreadfully as you have done; and can you now be so sottish as to think that God is obliged not to frustrate that hope?

When a sinner takes encouragement to neglect secret prayer which God has commanded, to gratify his lusts, to live a carnal vain life, to thwart God, to run upon him, and contemn him to his face, thinking with himself, "If I do so, God would not damn me; he is a merciful God, and therefore when I seek his mercy he will bestow it upon me;" must God be accounted hard because he will not do according to such a sinner's presumption?

Cannot he be excused from showing such a sinner mercy when he is pleased to seek it, without incurring the charge of being unjust; if this be the case, God has no liberty to vindicate his own honour and majesty; but must lay himself open to all manner of affronts, and yield himself up to the abuses of vile men, though they disobey, despise, and dishonour him, as much as they will; and when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace must not be in his own power and at his own disposal, but he must be obliged to dispense it at their call. He must take these bold and vile contemners of his majesty, when it suits them to ask it, and must forgive all their sins, and not only so, but must adopt them into his family, and make them his children, and bestow eternal glory upon them. What mean, low, and strange thoughts have such men of God, who think thus of him? Consider, that you have injured God the more, and have been the worse enemy to him, for his being a merciful God. So have you treated that attribute of God's mercy! How just is it therefore that you never should have any benefit of that attribute!

There is something peculiarly heinous in sinning against the mercy of God more than other attributes. There is such base and horrid ingratitude, in being the worse to God, because he is a being of infinite goodness and grace, that it above all things renders wickedness vile and detestable. This ought to win us, and engage us to serve God better; but instead of that, to sin against him the more, has something inexpressibly bad in it, and

does in a peculiar manner inhance guilt, and incense wrath; as seems to be intimated Rom. ii. 4. 5. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

The greater the mercy of God is, the more should you be engaged to love him, and live to his glory. But it has been contrarywise with you; the consideration of the mercies of God being so exceeding great, is the thing wherewith you have encouraged yourself in sin. You have heard that the mercy of God was without bounds, that it was sufficient to pardon the greatest sinner, and you have upon that very account ventured to be a very great sinner. Though it was very offensive to God, though you heard that God infinitely hated sin, and that such practices as you went on in were exceeding contrary to his nature, will, and glory, yet that did not make you uneasy; you heard that he was a very merciful God and had grace enough to pardon you, and so cared not how offensive your sins were to him. How long have some of you gone on in sin, and what great sins have some of you been guilty of, on that presumption! Your own conscience can give testimony to it, that this has made you refuse God's calls, and has made you regardless of his repeated commands. Now, how righteous would it be if God should swear in his wrath, that you should never be the better for his being infinitely merciful!

Your ingratitude has been the greater, that you have not only abused the attribute of God's mercy, taking encouragement from it to continue in sin, but you have also presumed that God would exercise infinite mercy to you in particular; which consideration should have especially endeared God to you. You have taken encouragement to sin the more, from that consideration, that Christ came into the world and died to save sinners; such thanks has Christ had from you, for enduring such a tormenting death for his enemies! Now, how justly might God refuse that you should ever be the better for his Son's laying down his life! It was because of these things that you put off seeking salvation. You would take the pleasures of sin still longer, hardening yourself because mercy was infinite, and it would not be too late, if you sought it afterwards; now, how justly may God disappoint you in this, and so order it that it shall be too late.

7. How have some of you risen up against God, and in the frame of your minds opposed him in his sovereign dispensations! And how justly upon that account might God oppose you, and set himself against you! You never yet would submit to God; never willingly comply, that God should have dominion over the world, and that he should govern it for his own glory, according to his own wisdom. You, a poor worm, a potsherd, a broken piece of an earthen vessel, have dared to find fault and quarrel with God. Isaiah, xlv. 9. "Wo to him that strives with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth: Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou?" But yet you have ventured to do it. Rom. ix. 20. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" But yet you have thought you was big enough; you have taken upon you to call God to an account, why he does thus and thus; you have said to Jehovah, What dost thou?

If you have been restrained by fear from openly venting your opposition and enmity of heart against God's government, yet it has been in you; you have not been quiet in the frame of your mind; you have had the heart of a viper within, and have been ready to spit your venom at God. It is well if sometimes you have not actually done it, by tolerating blasphemous thoughts and malignant risings of heart against him? yea, and the frame of your heart in some measure appeared an impatient and fretful behaviour.—Now, seeing you have thus opposed God, how just is it that God should oppose you? Or is it because you are so much better, and so much greater than God, that it is a crime for him to make that opposition against you which you make against him? Do you think that the liberty of making opposition is your exclusive prerogative, so that you may be an enemy to God, but God must by no means be an enemy to you, but must be looked upon under obligation nevertheless to help you, and save you by his blood, and bestow his best blessings upon you?

Consider how in the frame of your mind you have thwarted God in those very exercises of mercy towards others that you are seeking for yourself. God exercising his infinite grace towards your neighbours, has put you into an ill frame, and it may be, set you into a tumult of mind. How justly therefore may God refuse ever to exercise that mercy towards you! Have you not thus opposed God showing mercy to others, even at the very time when you pretended to be earnest with God for pity and help for yourself? Yea, and while you was endeavouring to

get something wherewith to recommend yourself to God? And will you look to God still with a challenge of mercy, and contend with him for it notwithstanding? Can you who have such a heart, and have thus behaved yourself, come to God for any other than mere *sovereign mercy?*

II. If you should for ever be cast off by God, it would be agreeable to your treatment of *Jesus Christ.* It would have been just with God if he had cast you off for ever, without ever making you the offer of a Saviour. But God hath not done that; he has provided a Saviour for sinners, and offered him to you, even his own Son Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour of men. All that are not forever cast off are saved by him. God offers men salvation through him, and has promised us, that if we come to him, we shall not be cast off. But if you have treated, and still treat this Saviour after such a manner, that if you should be eternally cast off by God, it would be most agreeable to your behaviour towards him; which appears by this, viz. "That you reject Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour."

If God offers you a Saviour from deserved punishment, and you will not receive him, then surely it is just that you should go without a Saviour. Or is God obliged, because you do not like *this* Saviour, to provide you another? He has given an infinitely honourable and glorious person, even his only begotten Son, to be a sacrifice for sin, and so provided salvation; and this Saviour is offered to you, now if you refuse to accept him, is God therefore unjust if he does not save you? Is he obliged to save you in a way of *your* own chusing, because you do not like the way of *his* chusing? Or will you charge Christ with injustice because he does not become your Saviour, when at the same time you will not have him when he offers himself to you, and beseeches you to accept of him as your Saviour?

I am sensible that by this time many persons are ready to object against this. If all should speak what they now think, we should hear a murmuring all over the meeting-house, and one and another would say, "I cannot see how this can be, that I am not willing that Christ should be my Saviour, when I would give all the world that he was my Saviour: How is it possible that I should not be willing to have Christ for my Saviour, when this is what I am seeking after, and praying for, and striving for, as for my life?"

Here therefore I would endeavour to convince you, that you

are under a gross mistake in this matter. And, 1*st*, I would endeavour to shew the grounds of your mistake. And, 2*dly*, To demonstrate to you, that you have rejected, and do wilfully reject Jesus Christ.

1*st*. That you may see the weak grounds of your mistake, consider,

1. There is a great deal of difference between a willingness not to be damned, and a being willing to receive Christ for your Saviour. You have the former; there is no doubt of that: No body supposes that you *love misery* so as to chuse an eternity of it; and so doubtless you are willing to be saved from eternal misery. But that is a very different thing from being willing to come to Christ: Persons very commonly mistake the one for the other, but they are quite two things. You may love the deliverance, but hate the deliverer. You tell of a willingness; but consider what is the object of that willingness. It does not respect Christ; the way of salvation by him is not at all the object of it; but it is wholly terminated on your escape from misery. The inclination of your will goes no further than self, it never reaches Christ. You are willing not to be miserable; that is, you love yourself, and there your will and choice terminate. And it is but a vain pretence and delusion to say or think, that you are willing to accept of Christ.

2. There is certainly a great deal of difference between a forced compliance and a free willingness. Force and freedom cannot consist together. Now that willingness, whereby you think you are willing to have Christ for a Saviour, is merely a forced thing. Your heart does not go out after Christ of itself, but you are forced and driven to seek an interest in him. Christ has no share at all in your heart; there is no manner of closing of the heart with him. This forced compliance is not what Christ seeks of you; he seeks a free and willing acceptance, Psam cx. 3. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." He seeks not that you should receive him *against* your will, but *with* a free will. He seeks entertainment in your heart and choice.——And if you refuse thus to receive Christ, how just is it that Christ should refuse to receive you? How reasonable are Christ's terms, who offers to save all those that willingly, or with a good will, accept of him for their Saviour! who can rationally expect that Christ should force himself upon any man to be his Saviour? Or what can be looked for more reasonable, than that all who would be saved by Christ, should heartily and freely entertain him? And surely it would be very

dishonourable for Christ to offer himself upon lower terms.—But I would now proceed,

2d. To shew that you are not willing to have Christ for a Saviour. To convince you of it, consider,

1. How it is possible that you should be willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour from the desert of a punishment that you are not sensible you have deserved. If you are truly willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour, it must be as a sacrifice to make atonement for your guilt. Christ came into the world on this errand, to offer himself as an atonement, to answer for our desert of punishment. But how can you be willing to have Christ for a Saviour from a desert of hell, if you be not sensible that you have a desert of hell? If you have not really deserved everlasting burnings in hell, then the very offer of an atonement for such a desert is an imposition upon you. If you have no such guilt upon you, then the very offer of a satisfaction for that guilt is an injury, because it implies in it a charge of guilt that you are free from. Now therefore it is impossible that a man who is not convinced of his guilt can be willing to accept of such an offer; because he cannot be willing to accept the charge which the offer implies. A man who is not convinced that he has deserved so dreadful a punishment, cannot willingly submit to be charged with it. If he thinks he is willing, it is but a mere forced, feigned, business; because in his heart he looks upon himself greatly injured; and therefore he cannot freely accept of Christ, under that notion of a Saviour from the desert of such a punishment; for such an acceptance is an implicit owning that he does deserve such a punishment.

I do not say, but that men may be willing to be saved from an undeserved punishment; they may rather not suffer it, than suffer it. But a man cannot be willing to accept one at God's hands, under the notion of a Saviour from a punishment deserved from him which he thinks he has not deserved; it is impossible that any one should freely allow a Saviour under that notion. Such an one cannot like the way of salvation by Christ; for if he thinks he has not deserved hell, then he will think that freedom from hell is a debt; and therefore cannot willingly and heartily receive it as a free gift.—If a king should condemn a man to some tormenting death, which the condemned person thought himself not deserving of, but looked upon the sentence unjust and cruel, and the king, when the time of execution drew nigh, should offer him his pardon, under the notion of a very great act of grace and clemency, the

condemned person never could willingly and heartily allow it under that notion, because he judged himself unjustly condemned.

Now by this it is evident that you are not willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour; because you never yet had such a sense of your own sinfulness, and such a conviction of your great guilt in God's sight, as to be indeed convinced that you lay justly condemned to the punishment of hell. You never was convinced that you had forfeited all favour, and was in God's hands, and at his sovereign and arbitrary disposal, to be either destroyed or saved, just as he pleased. You never yet was convinced of the sovereignty of God. Hence are there so many objections arising against the justice of your punishment from original sin, and from God's decrees, from mercy shown to others, and the like.

2. That you are not sincerely willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour, appears by this, That you never have been convinced that he is sufficient for the work of your salvation. You never had a sight or sense of any such excellency or worthiness in Christ, as should give such great value to his blood and his mediation with God, as that it was sufficient to be accepted for such exceeding guilty creatures, who have so provoked God, and exposed themselves to such amazing wrath. Saying it is so, and allowing it to be as others say, is a very different thing from being really convinced of it, and a being made sensible of it in your own heart. The sufficiency of Christ depends upon, or rather consists in his excellency. It is because he is so excellent a person that his blood is of sufficient value to atone for sin, and it is hence that his obedience is so worthy in God's sight; it is also hence that his intercession is so prevalent; and therefore those that never had any spiritual sight or sense of Christ's excellency, cannot be sensible of his sufficiency.

And that sinners are not convinced that Christ is sufficient for the work he has undertaken, appears most manifestly when they are under great convictions of their sin, and danger of God's wrath. Though it may be before they thought they could allow Christ to be sufficient, (for it is easy to allow any one to be sufficient for our defence at a time when we see no danger), yet when they come to be sensible of their guilt and God's wrath, what discouraging thoughts do they entertain! How are they ready to draw towards despair, as if there were no hope or help for such wicked creatures as they! The reason is, They have no apprehension or sense of any other way that God's majesty can be vindicated, but only in their misery.

To tell them of the blood of Christ signifies nothing, it does not relieve their sinking, despairing hearts. This makes it most evident that they are not convinced that Christ is sufficient to be their Mediator.—And as long as they are unconvinced of this, it is impossible they should be willing to accept of him as their Mediator and Saviour. A man in distressing fear will not willingly betake himself to a fort that he judges not sufficient to defend him from the enemy. A man will not willingly venture out into the ocean in a ship that he suspects is leaky, and will sink before he gets through his voyage.

3. It is evident that you are not willing to have Christ for your Saviour, because you have so mean an opinion of him, that you durst not trust his faithfulness. One that undertakes to be the Saviour of souls had need be faithful; for if he fails in such a trust, how great is the loss! But you are not convinced of Christ's faithfulness; as is evident, because at such times as when you are in a considerable measure sensible of your guilt and God's anger, you cannot be convinced that Christ is willing to accept of you, or that he stands ready to receive you, if you should come to him, though Christ so much invites you to come to him, and has so fully declared that he will not reject you, if you do come; as particularly, John, vi. 37.: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Now, there is no man can be heartily willing to trust his eternal welfare in the hands of an unfaithful person, or one whose faithfulness he suspects.

4. You are not willing to be saved in that way by Christ, as is evident, because you are not willing that your own goodness should be set at nought. In the way of salvation by Christ men's own goodness is wholly set at nought; there is no account at all made of it. Now you cannot be willing to be saved in a way wherein your own goodness is set at nought, as is evident, since you make much of it yourself. You make much of your prayers and pains in religion, and are often thinking of them; how considerable do they appear to you, when you look back upon them! And some of you are thinking how much more you have done than others, and expecting some respect or regard that God should manifest to what you do? Now, if you make so much of what you do yourself, it is impossible that you should be freely willing that God should make nothing of it. As we may see in other things; if a man is proud of a great estate, or if he values himself much upon his honourable office, or his great abilities, it is impossible that he should like it, and

heartily approve of it, that others should make light of these things and despise them.

Seeing therefore it is so evident, that you refuse to accept of Christ as your Saviour, why is Christ to be blamed that he does not save you? Christ has offered himself to you to be your Saviour in time past, and he continues offering himself still, and you continue to reject him, and yet complain that he does not save you.—So strangely unreasonable, and inconsistent with themselves, are gospel sinners!

But I expect there are many of you that still object. Such an objection as this, is probably now in the hearts of many here present.

Object. If I am not willing to have Christ for my Saviour, I cannot make myself willing.—But I would give an answer to this objection by laying down two things, that must be acknowledged to be exceeding evident.

1. It is no excuse, that you cannot receive Christ of yourself, unless you *would* if you could. This is so evident of itself, that it scarce needs any proof. Certainly if persons would not if they could, it is just the same thing as to the blame that lies upon them, whether they can or cannot. If you were willing, and then found that you could not, your being unable would alter the case, and might be some excuse; because then the defect would not be in your will, but only in your ability. But as long as you *will* not, it is no matter, whether you have ability or no ability.

If you are not willing to accept of Christ, it follows that you have no sincere willingness to be willing; because the will always necessarily approves of, and rests in its own acts. To suppose the contrary would be to suppose a contradiction; it would be to suppose that a man's will is contrary to itself, or that he wills contrary to what he himself wills. As you are not willing to come to Christ, and cannot make yourself willing, so you have no sincere desire to be willing; and therefore may most justly perish without a Saviour. There is no excuse at all for you; for say what you will about your inability, the seat of your blame lies in your perverse *will*, that is an *enemy* to the Saviour. It is in vain for you to tell of your want of power, as long as your will is found defective. If a man should hate you, and smite you in the face, but should tell you at the same time, that he hated you so much, that he could not help chusing and willing so to do, would you take it the more patiently for that? Would not your indignation be rather stirred up the more?

2. If you would be willing if you could, that is no excuse, unless your willingness to be willing be *sincere.* That which is hypocritical, and does not come from the heart, but is merely forced, ought wholly to be set aside, as worthy of no consideration; because common sense teaches, that what is not hearty but hypocritical is indeed nothing, being only a shew of what is not; but that which is good for nothing, ought to go for nothing. But if you set aside all that is not free, and call nothing a willingness, but a free hearty willingness; then see how the case stands, and whether or no you have not lost all your excuse for standing out against the calls of the gospel. You say you would make yourself willing to accept if you *could*; but it is not from any good principle that you are willing for that. It is not from any free inclination, or true respect to Christ, or any love to your duty, or any spirit of obedience. It is not from the influence of any real respect, or tendency in your heart, towards any thing good, or from any other principle than such as is in the hearts of devils, and would make them have the same sort of willingness in the same circumstances. It is therefore evident, that there can be no goodness in that *would* be willing to come to Christ: And that which has no goodness, cannot be an excuse for any badness. If there be no good in it, then it signifies nothing, and weighs nothing, when put into the scales to counterbalance that which is bad.

Sinners therefore spend their time in foolish arguing and objecting, making much of that which is good for nothing, making those excuses that be not worth offering. It it in vain to keep making objections. You stand justly condemned. The blame lies at your door: Thrust it off from you as often as you will, it will return upon you. Sew fig-leaves as long as you will, your nakedness will appear. You continue wilfully and wickedly rejecting Jesus Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour, and therefore it is sottish madness in you to charge Christ with injustice that he does not save you.

Here is the sin of unbelief! Thus the guilt of that great sin lies upon you! If you never had thus treated a Saviour, you might most justly yave been damned to all eternity: It would but be exactly agreeable to your treatment of God. But besides this, when God, notwithstanding, has offered you his own dear Son, to save you from this endless misery you had deserved, and not only so, but to make you happy eternally in the enjoyment of himself, you have refused him, and would not have him for your Saviour, and still refuse to comply with the offers of the gospel; what can render any person more inexcusable? If you should now perish for ever, what can you have to say!

Hereby the justice of God in your destruction appears in two respects:

1. It is more abundantly manifest that it is *just* that you should be destroyed. Justice never appears so conspicuous as it does after refused and abused mercy. Justice in damnation appears abundantly the more clear and bright, after a wilful rejection of offered salvation. What can an offended prince do more than freely offer pardon to a condemned malefactor? And if he refuses to accept of it, will any one say that his execution is unjust!

2. God's justice will appear in your *greater* destruction. Besides the guilt that you would have had if a Saviour never had been offered. You bring that great additional guilt upon you, of most ungratefully refusing offered deliverance. What more base and vile treatment of God can there be, than for you, when justly condemned to eternal misery, and ready to be executed, and God graciously sends his own Son, who comes and knocks at your door with a pardon in his hand, and not only a pardon, but a deed of eternal glory; I say, what can be worse, than for you, out of dislike and enmity against God and his Son, to refuse to accept those benefits at his hands! How justly may the anger of God be greatly incensed and increased by it! when a sinner thus ungratefully rejects mercy, his last error is worse than the first; this is more heinous than all his former rebellion, and may justly bring down more fearful wrath upon him.

The heinousness of this sin of rejecting a Saviour especially appears in two things,

1. The greatness of the benefits offered; which appears in the greatness of the deliverance, which is from inexpressible degrees of corruption and wickedness of heart and life, the least degree of which is infinitely evil; and from misery that is everlasting; and in the greatness and glory of the inheritance purchased and offered, Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

2. The wonderfulness of the way in which these benefits are procured and offered. That God should lay help on his own Son, when our case was so deplorable that help could be had in no mere creature; and that he should undertake for us, and should come into the world, and take upon him our nature, and should not only appear in a low state of life, but should die such a death, and endure such torments and contempt for sinners while enemies, how wonderful is it! And

what tongue or pen can set forth the greatness of the ingratitude, baseness, and perverseness there is in it, when a perishing sinner that is in the most extreme necessity of salvation, rejects it, after it is procured in such a way as this! That so glorious a person should be thus treated, and that when he comes on so gracious an errand! That he should stand so long offering himself and calling and inviting, as he has done to many of you, and all to no purpose, but all the while be set at nought! Surely you might justly be cast into hell without one more offer of a Saviour! Yea, and thrust down into the lowest hell! Herein you have exceeded the very devils; for they never rejected the offers of such glorious mercy; no, nor of any mercy at all. This will be the distinguishing condemnation of gospel-sinners, John iii. 18. "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."—That outward smoothness of your carriage towards Christ, that appearance of respect to him in your looks, your speeches, and gestures, do not argue but that you set him at nought in your heart. There may be much of these outward shews of respect, and yet you be like Judas, that betrayed the Son of man with a kiss; and like those mockers that bowed the knee before him, and at the same time spit in his face.

III. If God should for ever cast you off and destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of *others*. It would be no other than what would be exactly answerable to your behaviour towards your fellow creatures, that have the same human nature, and are naturally in the same circumstances with you, and that you ought to love as yourself. And that appears especially in two things.

1 You have many of you been opposite in your spirit to the salvation of others. There are several ways that natural men manifest a spirit of opposition against the salvation of souls. It sometimes appears by a fear that their companions, acquaintance, and equals, will obtain mercy, and so become unspeakably happier than they. It is sometimes manifested by an uneasiness at the news of what others have hopefully obtained. It appears when persons envy others for it, and dislike them the more, and disrelish their talk, and avoid their company, and cannot bear to hear their religious discourse, and especially to receive warnings and counsels from them. And it oftentimes appears by their backwardness to entertain charitable thoughts of them, and by their being brought with difficulty to believe that they have ob-

tained mercy, and a forwardness to listen to any thing that seems to contradict it. The devil hated to own Job's sincerity, Job i. 7, &c. and chap ii. verses 3, 4, 5. There appears very often much of this spirit of the devil in natural men. Sometimes they are ready to make a ridicule of others' pretended goodness: They speak of the ground of others hopes, as the enemies of the Jews did of the wall that they built. Neh. iv. 3. "Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, That which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone-wall." There are many that join with Sanballat and Tobiah, and are of the same spirit with them. There always was, and always will be, an enmity betwixt the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. It appeared in Cain, who hated his brother, because he was more acceptable to God than himself; and it appears still in these times, and in this place. There are many that are like the elder brother, who could not bear that the prodigal when he returned should be received with such joy and good entertainment, and was put into a fret by it, both against his brother that had returned, and his father that made him so welcome. Luke xv.

Thus have many of you been opposite to the salvation of others, who stand in as great necessity of it as you. You have been against their being delivered from everlasting misery, who can bear it no better than you; not because their salvation would do you any hurt, or their damnation help you, any otherwise than as it would gratify that vile spirit that is so much like the spirit of the devil, who, because he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy. How just therefore is it that God should be opposite, to your salvation? If you have so little love or mercy in you as to begrudge your neighbour's salvation, whom you have no cause to hate, but the law of God and nature requires you to love, why is God bound to exercise such infinite love and mercy to you, as to save you at the price of his own blood? You whom he is no way bound to love, but who have deserved his hatred a thousand and a thousand times? You are not willing that others should be converted, who have behaved themselves injuriously towards you; and yet, will you count it hard if God does not bestow converting grace upon you that have deserved ten thousand times as ill of God, as ever any of your neighbours have of you? You are opposite to God's shewing mercy to those that you think have been vicious persons, and are very unworthy of such mercy. Is others' unworthiness a just reason why God should not bestow mercy on them? And yet will God be heard, if, notwithstanding all your unworthiness,

and the abominableness of your spirit and practice in his sight, he does not show you mercy? You would have God bestow liberally on you, and upbraid not; but yet when he shews mercy to others, you are ready to upbraid as soon as you hear of it; you immediately are thinking with yourself how ill they have behaved themselves; and it may be your mouths on this occasion are open, enumerating and aggravating the sins they have been guilty of. You would have God bury all your faults, and wholly blot out all your transgressions; but yet if he bestows mercy on others, it may be you will take that occasion to rake up all their old faults that you can think of. You do not much reflect on and condemn yourself for your baseness and unjust spirit towards others, in your opposition to their salvation; you do not quarrel with yourself, and condemn yourself for this; but yet you in your heart will quarrel with God, and fret at his dispensations, because you think he seems opposite to shewing mercy to you. One would think that the consideration of these things should for ever *stop your mouth.*

2. Consider how you have promoted others' damnation. Many of you, by the bad examples you have set, by corrupting the minds of others, by your sinful conversation, by leading them into, or strengthening them in sin, and by the mischief you have done in human society other ways that might be mentioned, have been guilty of those things that have tended to others' damnation. You have heretofore appeared on the side of sin and Satan, and have strengthened their interest, and have been many ways accessary to others' sins, have hardened their hearts, and thereby have done what has tended to the ruin of their souls.—Without doubt there are those here present who have been in a great measure the means of others' damnation. One man may really be a means of others' damnation as well as salvation. Christ charges the scribes and Pharisees with this, Matth. xxiii. 13. "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in." We have no reason to think that this congregation has none in it who are cursed from day to day by poor souls that are roaring out in hell, whose damnation they have been a means of, or have greatly contributed to.—There are many who contribute to their own children's damnation, by neglecting their education, by setting them bad examples, and bringing them up in sinful ways. They take some care of their bodies, but take little care of their poor souls; they provide for them bread to eat, but deny them the

bread of life, that their famishing souls stand in need of. And are there no such parents here who have thus treated their children? If their children be not gone to hell, no thanks to them; it is not because they have not done what has tended to their destruction. Seeing therefore you have had no more regard to others' salvation, and have promoted their damnation, how justly might God leave you to perish yourself?

IV. If God should eternally cast you off, it would but be agreeable to your own behaviour towards *yourself*: And that in two respects;

1. In being so *careless* of your own salvation. You have refused to take care for your salvation, as God has counselled and commanded you from time to time; and why may not God neglect it, now you seek it of him? Is God obliged to be more careful of your happiness, than you are either of your own happiness or his glory? Is God bound to take that care for you, out of love to you, that you will not take for yourself, either from love to yourself, or regard to his authority? How long, and how greatly, have you neglected the welfare of your precious soul, refusing to take pains and deny yourself, or put yourself a little out of your way for your salvation, while God has been calling upon you! Neither your duty to God, nor love to your own soul, were enough to induce you to do little things for your own eternal welfare; and yet do you now expect that God should do great things, putting forth almighty power, and exercising infinite mercy for it? You was urged to take care for your salvation, and not to put it off. You was told *that* was the best time before you grew older, and that it might be, if you would put it off, God would not hear you afterwards; but yet you would not hearken; you would run the venture of it. Now how justly might God order it so, that it should be too late, leaving you to seek in vain? You was told, that you would repent of it if you delayed; but you would not hear: How justly therefore may God give you cause to repent of it, by refusing to show you mercy now? If God sees you going on in ways contrary to his commands and his glory, and requires you to forsake them, and tells you that they tend to the destruction of your own soul, and therefore counsels you to avoid them, and you refuse; how just would it be if God should be provoked by it, henceforward to be as careless of the good of your soul as you are yourself?

2. You have not only neglected your salvation, but you have wilfully taken direct courses to *undo* yourself. You have gone on in those ways and practices which have directly tended to your damnation, and have been perverse and obstinate in it. You cannot plead ignorance; you had all the light set before you that you could desire. God told you that you was undoing yourself; but yet you would do it. He told you that the path you was going in led to destruction, and counselled you to avoid it; but you would not hearken. How justly therefore may God leave you to be undone! You have obstinately persisted to travel in the way that leads to hell for a long time, contrary to God's continual counsels and commands, till it may be at length you are got almost to your journey's end, and are come near to hell's gate, and so begin to be sensible of your danger and misery; and now account it unjust and hard if God will not deliver you! You have destroyed yourself, and destroyed yourself wilfully, contrary to God's repeated counsels, yea, and destroyed yourself in fighting against God. Now therefore, why do you blame any but *yourself* if you are destroyed? If you will undo yourself in opposing God, and while God opposes you by his calls and counsels, and, it may be too, by the convictions of his Spirit, what can you object against it, if God now leaves you to be undone? You would have your own way, and did not like that God should oppose you in it, and your way was to ruin your own soul: How just therefore is it, if, now at length, God ceases to oppose you, and falls in with you, and lets your soul be ruined; and as you would destroy yourself, so should put to his hand to destroy you too! The ways you went on in had a natural tendency to your misery: If you would drink poison in opposition to God, and in contempt of him and his advice, who can you blame but yourself if you are poisoned, and so perish? If you would run into the fire against all restraints both of God's mercy and authority, you must even blame yourself if you are burnt.

Thus I have proposed some things to your consideration, which, if you are not exceeding blind, senseless, and perverse, will *stop your mouth*, and convince you that you stand justly condemned before God; and that he would in no wise deal hardly with you, but altogether *justly*, in denying you any mercy, and in refusing to hear your prayers, though you pray never so earnestly, and never so often, and continue in it never so long. God may utterly disregard your tears and moans, your heavy heart, your earnest desires, and great endeavours; and

he may cast you into eternal destruction, without any regard to your welfare, denying you converting grace, and giving you over to Satan, and at last cast you into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, to be there to eternity, having no rest day or night, for ever glorifying his justice upon you in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

Object. But here many may still object, (for I am sensible it is an hard thing to *stop* sinners' mouths), "God shews mercy to others that have done these things as well as I, yea, that have done a great deal worse than I."

Ans. 1. That does not prove that God is any way *bound* to shew mercy to you, or them either. If God bestows it on others, he does not so because he is bound to bestow it: He might if he had pleased, with glorious justice, have denied it them. If God bestows it on some, that does not prove that he is *bound* to bestow it on *any*; and if he is bound to bestow it on none, then he is not bound to bestow it on you. God is in debt to none; and if he gives to some that he is not in debt to, because it is his pleasure, that does not bring him into debt to others. It alters not the case as to you, whether others have it, or have it not: You do not deserve damnation the less, than if mercy never had been bestowed on any at all. Matth. xx. 15. "Is thine eye evil, because mine is good?"

2. If this objection be good, then the exercise of God's mercy is not in his *own right*, and his grace is not his own to give. That which God may not dispose of as he pleases, is not his own; for that which is one's own, is at his own disposal: but if it be not God's own, then he is not capable of making a gift or present of it to any one; it is impossible to give what is a *debt*.—What is it that you would make of God? Must the great God be tied up, that he must not use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts, but if he bestows them on one, must be looked upon obliged to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right, with respect to the gifts of his grace, that a man has to his money or goods? Is it because God is not so great, and should be more in subjection than man, that this cannot be allowed him? If any of you see cause to shew kindness to a neighbour, do all the rest of your neighbours come to you, and tell you, that you owe them so much as you have given to such a man? But this is the way that you deal with God, as though God were not worthy to have as absolute a property in his goods, as you have in yours.

At this rate God cannot make a present of any thing; he has nothing of his own to bestow: if he has a mind to shew peculiar favour to some, or to lay some particular persons under peculiar obligations to him, he cannot do it; because he has no special gift at his own disposal. If this be the case, why do you pray to God to bestow saving grace upon you? If God does not do fairly to deny it you, because he bestows it on others, then it is not worth your while to pray for it, but you may go and tell him that he has bestowed it on others as bad or worse than you, and so *demand* it of him as a debt. And at this rate persons never need to *thank* God for salvation, when it is bestowed; for what occasion is there to thank God for that which was not at his own disposal, and that he could not fairly have denied? The thing at bottom is, that men have low thoughts of God, and high thoughts of themselves; and therefore it is that they look upon God as having so little right, and they so much. Matth. xx. 15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?

3. God may justly shew greater respect to others than to you, for you have shown greater respect to others than to God. You have rather chosen to offend God than men. God only shews a greater respect to others, who are by nature your equals, than to you; but you have shown a greater respect to those that are infinitely inferior to God than to him. You have shown a greater regard to *wicked* men than to God; you have honoured them more, loved them better, and adhered to them rather than to him. Yea, you have honoured the devil, in many respects, more than God: you have chosen his will and his interest, rather than God's will and his glory: you have chosen a little worldly pelf, rather than God: you have set more by a vile lust than by him: you have chosen these things, and rejected God. You have set your heart on these things, and cast God behind your back: And where is the injustice if God is pleased to shew greater respect to others than to you, or if he chooses others and rejects you? You have shown great respect to vile and worthless things, and no respect to God's glory; and why may not God set his love on others, and have no respect to your happiness? You have shown great respect to others, and not to God, whom you are laid under infinite obligations to respect above all; and why may not God shew respect to others, and not to you, who never have laid him under the least obligation?

And will you not be ashamed, notwithstanding all these things, still to open your mouth, to object and cavil about the *decrees* of

God, and other things that you cannot fully understand. Let the decrees of God be what they will, that alters not the case as to your *liberty*, any more than if God had only foreknown. And why is God to blame for decreeing things? Especially since he decrees nothing but *good*. How unbecoming an infinitely wise Being would it have been to have made a world, and let things run at random, without disposing events, or fore-ordering how they should come to pass? And what is that to you, how God has fore-ordered things, as long as your constant experience teaches you, that it does not hinder your doing what you choose to do. This you know, and your daily practice and behaviour amongst men declares that you are fully sensible of it, with respect to yourself and others. Still to object, because there are some things in God's dispensations above your understanding, is exceedingly unreasonable. Your own conscience charges you with great guilt, and with those things that have been mentioned, let the secret things of God be what they will. Your conscience charges you with those vile dispositions, and that base behaviour towards God, that you would at any time most highly resent in your neighbour towards you, and that not a whit the less for any concern those secret counsels and mysteterious dispensations of God may have in the matter It is in vain for you to exalt yourself against an infinitely great, and holy, and just God. If you continue in it, it will be to your eternal shame and confusion, when hereafter you shall see at whose door all the blame of your misery lies

I will finish what I have to say to natural men in the application of this doctrine, with a *caution* not to improve the doctrine to *discouragement*. For though it would be *righteous* in God for ever to cast you off, and destroy you, yet it would also be just in God to save you, in and through Christ, who has made complete satisfaction for all sin. Rom. iii. 25, 26. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Yea, God may, through this Meditator, not only justly, but honourably, shew you mercy. The blood of Christ is so precious, that it is fully sufficient to pay the debt you have contracted, and perfectly to vindicate the divine Majesty from all the dishonour cast upon it, by those many great sins of yours that have been mentioned. It was as great, and indeed a much greater thing, for Christ to die, than it would have been for you and all mankind to have burnt in

hell to all eternity. Of such dignity and excellency is Christ in the eyes of God, that, seeing he has suffered so much for poor sinners, God is willing to be at peace with them, however vile and unworthy they have been, and on how many accounts soever the punishment would be *just*. So that that you need not be at all discouraged from seeking mercy, for there is enough in Christ.

Indeed it would not become the glory of God's majesty to shew mercy to you, so sinful and vile a creature, for any thing that you have done; for such worthless and despicable things as your prayers, and other religious performances. It would be very dishonourable and unworthy of God so to do, and it is in vain to expect it. He will shew mercy only on Christ's account and that, according to his sovereign pleasure, on whom he pleases, when he pleases, and in what manner he pleases. You cannot bring him under *obligation* by your works; do what you will, he will not look on himself obliged. But if it be his pleasure, he can honourably shew mercy through Christ to any sinner of you all, not one in this congregation excepted.—Therefore here is encouragement for you still to seek and wait, notwithstanding all your wickedness; agreeable to Samuel's speech to to the children of Israel, when they were terrified with the thunder and rain that God sent, and then guilt stared them in the face, 1 Sam. xii. 20. "Fear not; ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your hearts."

I would conclude this discourse by putting the godly in mind of the freeness and wonderfulness of the grace of God towards them. For such were the same of you.—The case was just so with you as you have heard; you had such a wicked heart, you lived such a wicked life, and it would have been most just with God for ever to have cast you off: but he has had mercy upon you; he hath made his glorious grace appear in your everlasting salvation. You had no love to God; but yet he has exercised unspeakable love to you. You have contemned God, and set light by him; but so great a value has God's grace set on you and your happiness, that you have been redeemed at the price of the blood of his own Son. You chose to be with Satan in his service; but yet God hath made you a joint heir with Christ of his glory. You was ungrateful for past mercies; yet God not only continued those mercies, but bestowed unspeakably greater mercies upon you. You refused to hear when God called; yet God heard you when you called. You abused the infiniteness

of God's mercy to encourage yourself in sin against him; yet God has manifested the infiniteness of that mercy, in the exercises of it towards you. You have rejected Christ, and set him at nought; and yet he is become your Saviour. You have neglected your own salvation; but God has not neglected it. You have destroyed yourself; but yet in God has been your help. God has magnified his free grace towards you, and not to others; because he has chosen you, and it hath pleased him to set his love upon you.

O! what cause is here for praise? What obligations you are under to bless the Lord who hath dealt bountifully with you, and magnify his holy name? What cause for you to praise God in humility, to walk humbly before him. Ezek. xvi. 63.: "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God!" You shall never open your mouth in boasting, or self-justification; but lie the lower before God for his mercy to you. You have reason, the more abundantly, to open your mouth in God's praises, that they may be continually in your mouth, both here and to all eternity, for his rich, unspeakable, and sovereign mercy to you, whereby he, and he alone, hath made you to differ from others.

DISCOURSE V.

THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST.

REV. v. 5, 6.

And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain——.

THE visions and revelations the apostle John had of the future events of God's providence, are here introduced with a vision of the book of God's decrees, by which those events were fore-ordained. This is represented (ver. 1.) as a book in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, "written within and on the back side, and sealed with seven seals." Books, in the form in which they were wont of old to be made, were broad leaves of parchment or paper, or something of that nature, joined together at one edge, and so rolled up together, and then sealed, or some way fastened together, to prevent their unfolding and opening. Hence we read of the roll of a book, Jer. xxxvi. 2. It seems to have been such a book that John had a vision of here; and therefore it is said to be "written within and on the back side," i. e. on the inside pages, and also on one of the outside pages, viz. that which was rolled in, in rolling the book up together. And it is said to be "sealed with seven seals," to signify that what was written in it was perfectly hidden and secret; or that God's decrees of future

events are sealed, and shut up from all possibility of being discovered by creatures, till God is pleased to make them known. We find that seven is often used in Scripture as the number of perfection, to signify the superlative or most perfect degree of any thing; which probably arose from this, that on the seventh day God beheld the works of creation finished, and rested and rejoiced in them, as being complete and perfect.

When John saw this book, he tells us, he "saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." And that he wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and read the book, neither to look thereon." And then tells us how his tears were dried up, viz. "that one of the elders said unto him, Weep not; Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed," &c. as in the text. Though no man nor angel, nor any mere creature, was found either able to loose the seals, or worthy to be admitted to the privilege of reading the book; yet this was declared, for the comfort of this beloved disciple, that Christ was found both able and worthy. And we have an account in the succeeding chapters how he actually did it, opening the seals in order, first one, and then another, revealing what God had decreed should come to pass hereafter. And we have an account in this chapter, of his coming and taking the book out of the right hand of him that sat one the throne, and of the joyful praises that were sung to him in heaven and earth on that occasion.

Many things might be observed in the words of the text; but it is to my present purpose only to take notice of the two distinct appellations here given to Christ.

1. He is called a *Lion. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.* He seems to be be called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, in allusion to what Jacob said in his blessing of the tribes on his death-bed; who, when he came to bless Judah, compares him to a lion, Gen. xlix. 9. "Judah is a lion's welp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" And also to the standard of the camp of Judah in the wilderness, on which was displayed a lion, according to the ancient tradition of the Jews. It is much on account of the valiant acts of David that the tribe Judah, of which David was, is in Jacob's prophetical blessing compared to a lion; but more especially with

an eye to Jesus Christ, who also was of that tribe, and was descended of David, and is in our text called "the root of David;" and therefore Christ is here called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."

2 He is called a *Lamb.* John was told of a Lion that had prevailed to open the book, and probably expected to see a lion in his vision; but while he is expecting, behold a Lamb appears to open the book, an exceeding diverse kind of creature from a lion. A lion is a devourer, one that is wont to make terrible slaughter of others; and no creature more easily falls a prey to him than a lamb. And Christ is here represented not only as a Lamb, a creature very liable to be slain, but a "Lamb as it had been slain," that is, with the marks of its deadly wounds appearing on it.

That which I would observe from the words, for the subject of my present discourse, is this, viz.——

"There is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ."

The lion and the lamb, though very diverse kinds of creatures, yet have each their peculiar excellencies. The lion excels in strength, and in the majesty of his appearance and voice: The lamb excels in meekness and patience, besides the excellent nature of the creature as good for food, and yielding that which is fit for our cloathing, and being suitable to be offered in sacrifice to God. But we see that Christ is in the text compared to both; because the diverse excellencies of both wonderfully meet in him—In handling this subject I would

First, Shew wherein there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ.

Secondly, How this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in Christ's acts.

And then make application.

First, I would shew wherein there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ. Which appears in three things,

I. There is a conjunction of such excellencies in Christ, as, in our manner of conceiving, are very diverse one from another.

II. There is in him a conjunction of such really diverse excellencies, as otherwise would have seemed to us utterly incompatible in the same subject.

III. Such diverse excellencies are exercised in him towards men, that otherwise would have seemed impossible to be exercised towards the same object.

I. There is a conjunction of such excellencies in Christ, as, in our manner of conceiving, are very diverse one from another. Such are the various divine perfections and excellencies that Christ is possessed of. Christ is a divine person; and therefore has all the attributes of God. The difference between these is chiefly relative, and in our manner of conceiving them. And those which in this sense, are most diverse, meet in the person of Christ. I shall mention two instances.

1. There do meet in Jesus Christ infinite highness and infinite condescension. Christ, as he is God, is infinitely great and high above all. He is higher than the kings of the earth; for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is higher than the heavens, and higher than the highest angels of heaven. So great is he, that all men, all kings and princes, are as worms of the dust before him; all nations are as the drop of the bucket, and the light dust of the balance; yea, and angels themselves are as nothing before him. He is so high, that he is infinitely above any need of us; above our reach, that we cannot be profitable to him; and above our conceptions, that we cannot comprehend him. Prov. xxx. 4. "What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Our understandings, if we stretch them never so far, cannot reach up to his divine glory. Job xi. 8. "It is high as heaven, what canst thou do?" Christ is the Creator and great possessor of heaven and earth. He is sovereign Lord of all. He rules over the whole universe, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him. His knowledge is without bound; His wisdom is perfect, and what none can circumvent. His power is infinite, and none can resist him. His riches are immense and inexhaustible. His majesty is infinitely awful.

And yet he is one of infinite condescension. None are so low or inferior, but Christ's condescension is sufficient to take a gracious notice of them. He condescends not only to the angels, humbling himself to behold the things that are done in heaven, but he also condescends to such poor creatures as men; and that not only so as to take notice of princes and great men, but of those that are of meanest rank and degree, "the poor of the world," James ii. 5. Such as are commonly despised by their fellow-creatures, Christ does not despise.

1 Cor. i. 28. "Base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen." Christ condescends to take notice of beggars, Luke xvi. 22. and people of the most despised nations. In Christ Jesus is neither "Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free," Col. iii. 11. He that is thus high, condescends to take a gracious notice of little children, Matth. xix. 14. "Suffer little children to come unto me" Yea, which is more, his condescension is sufficient to take a gracious notice of the most unworthy, sinful creatures, those that have no good deservings, and those that have infinite ill-deservings.

Yea, so great is his condescension, that it is not only sufficient to take some gracious notice of such as these, but sufficient for every thing that is an act of condescension. His condesension is great enough to become their friend; to become their companion, to unite their souls to him in spiritual marriage. It is enough to take their nature upon him, to become one of them, that he may be one with them. Yea, it is great enough to abase himself yet lower for them, even to expose himself to shame and spitting; yea, to yield up himself to an ignominious death for them. And what act of condescension can be conceived of greater? Yet such an act as this, has his condescension yielded to, for those that are so low and mean, despicable and unworthy!

Such a conjunction of infinite highness and low condescension, in the same person, is admirable. We see, by manifold instances, what a tendency an high station has in men, to make them to be of a quite contrary disposition. If one worm be a little exalted above another, by having more dust, or a bigger dunghill, how much does he make of himself! What a distance does he keep from those that are below him! And a little condescension is what he expects should be made much of, and greatly acknowledged. Christ condescends to wash our feet; but how would great men, (or rather the bigger worms), account themselves debased by acts of far less condescension!

2. There meet in Jesus Christ, infinite *justice* and infinite *grace*. As Christ is a divine person, he is infinitely holy and just; hating sin, and disposed to execute condign punishment for sin. He is the Judge of the world, and the infinitely just Judge of it, and will not at all acquit the wicked, or by any means clear the guilty.

And yet he is infinitely gracious and merciful. Though his justice be so strict with respect to all sin, and every breach of the law, yet he has grace sufficient for every sinner, and even the chief of sinners. And it is not only sufficient for the most un-

worthy to show them mercy, and bestow some good upon them, but to bestow the greatest good; yea, it is sufficient to bestow all good upon them, and to do all things for them. There is no benefit or blessing that they can receive, so great but the grace of Christ is sufficient to bestow it on the greatest sinner that ever lived. And not only so, but so great is his grace, that nothing is too much as the means of this good. It is sufficient not only to do great things, but also to suffer in order to it; and not only to suffer, but to suffer most extremely even unto death, the most terrible of natural evils; and not only death, but the most ignominious and tormenting, and every way the most terrible that men could inflict; yea, and greater sufferings than men could inflict, who could only torment the body. He had sufferings in his soul, that were the more immediate fruits of the wrath of God against the sins of those he undertakes for.

II. There do meet in the person of Christ such really diverse excellencies, which otherwise would have been thought utterly incompatible in the same subject; such as are conjoined in no other person whatever, either divine, human, or angelical; and such as neither men nor angels would ever have imagined could have met together in the same person, had it not been seen in the person of Christ, I would give some instances.

1. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite *glory*, and lowest *humility*. Infinite glory, and the virtue of humility, meet in no other person but Christ. They meet in no created person; for no created person has infinite glory: and they meet in no other divine person but Christ. For though the divine nature be infinitely abhorrent to pride, yet humility is not properly predicable of God the Father, and the Holy Ghost, that exists only in the divine nature; because it is proper excellency only of a created nature; for it consists radically in a sense of a comparative lowness and littleness before God, or the great distance between God and the subject of this virtue; but it would be a contradiction to suppose any such thing in God.

But in Jesus Christ, who is both God and man,, those two diverse excellencies are sweetly united. He is a person infinitely exalted in glory and dignity. Phil. ii. 6. "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robberyt o be equal with God." There is equal honour due to him with the Father. John v. 23.—"That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." God himself says to him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Heb. i. 8. And there is the same supreme respect and divine worship paid to him by the angels of heaven, as to God the Father. (ver. 6.) "Let all the angels of God worship him."

But however he is thus above all, yet he is lowest of all in humility. There never was so great an instance of this virtue among either men or angels, as Jesus. None ever was so sensible of the distance between God and him, or had a heart so lowly before God, as the man Christ Jesus. Matth. xi. 29. What a wonderful spirit of humility appeared in him, when he was here upon earth, in all his behaviour! In his contentment in his mean outward condition, contentedly living in the family of Joseph the carpenter, and Mary his mother, for thirty years together, and afterwards choosing outward meanness, poverty, and contempt, rather than earthly greatness; in his washing his disciples feet, and in all his speeches and deportment towards them; in his cheerfully sustaining the form of a servant through his whole life, and submitting to such immense humiliation at death!

2. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite *majesty* and transcendent *meekness*. These again are two qualifications that meet together in no other person but Christ. Meekness, properly so called, is a virtue proper only to the creature: We scarcely ever find meekness mentioned as a divine attribute in Scripture; at least not in the New-Testament; for thereby seems to be signified, a calmless and quietness of spirit, arising from humility in mutable beings that are naturally liable to be put into a ruffle by the assaults of a tempestuous and injurious world. But Christ being both God and man, hath both infinite majesty and superlative meekness.

Christ was a person of infinite majesty. It is he that is spoken of, Psalm xlv. 3. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty." It is he that is mighty, that rideth on the heavens, and in his excellency on the sky. It is he that is terrible out of his holy places; who is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea: before whom a fire goeth, and burneth up his enemies round about; at whose presence the earth quakes, and the hills melt; who sitteth on the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof are as grashoppers; who rebukes the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up the rivers; whose eyes are as a flame of fire, from whose presence, and from the glory of whose power, the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction; who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who hath heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, and is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of whose dominion there is no end.

And yet he was the most marvellous instance of meekness, and humble quietness of spirit, that ever was; agreeable to the *prophecies* of him, Matth. xxi. 4, 5.: "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." And, agreeable to what Christ declares of himself, Matth. xi. 29. "I am meek and lowly in heart." And agreeable to what was manifest in his behaviour: For there never was such an instance seen on earth, of a meek behaviour, under injuries and reproaches, and towards enemies; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. He had a wonderful spirit of forgiveness, was ready to forgive his worst enemies, and prayed for them with fervent and effectual prayers. With what meekness did he appear in the ring of soldiers that were contemning and mocking him; he was silent, and opened not his mouth, but went as a lamb to the slaughter. Thus is Christ a lion in majesty, and a lamb in meekness.

3. There meet in the person of Christ the deepest *reverence* towards God, and *equality* with God. Christ, when on earth, appeared full of holy reverence towards the Father. He paid the most reverential worship to him, praying to him with postures of reverence. Thus we read of his "kneeling down and praying," Luke xxii. 41. This became Christ, as one who had taken on him the human nature; but at the same time he existed in the divine nature; whereby his person was in all respects equal to the person of the Father. God the Father hath no attribute or perfection that the Son hath not, in equal degree, and equal glory. These things meet in no other person but Jesus Christ.

4. There are conjoined in the person of Christ infinite *worthiness* of good, and the greatest *patience* under sufferings of evil. He was perfectly innocent, and deserved no suffering. He deserved nothing from God by any guilt of his own; and he deserved no ill from men. Yea, he was not only harmless and undeserving of suffering, but he was infinitely worthy; worthy of the infinite love of the Father, worthy of infinite and eternal happiness, and infinitely worthy of all possible esteem, love, and service from all men. And yet he was perfectly patient under the greatest sufferings that ever were endured in this world. Heb. xii. 2. "He endured the cross, despising the shame." He suffered not from his Father for his faults, but ours; and he suffered from men not for his faults, but for those things on account of which he was infinitely worthy of their love

and honour; which made his patience the more wonderful and the more glorious. 1 Pet. ii. 20, &c. "For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently; but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." There is no such conjunction of innocence, worthiness, and patience under sufferings, as in the person of Christ.

5. In the person of Christ are conjoined an exceeding spirit of *obedience*, with supreme *dominion* over heaven and earth. Christ is the Lord of all things in two respects: He is so, as God-man and Mediator; and thus his dominion is appointed, and given him of the Father. Having it by delegation from God, he is as it were the Father's vicegerent. But he is Lord of all things in another respect, viz. as he is (by his original nature) God; and so he is by natural right the Lord of all, and supreme over all as much as the Father. Thus, he has dominion over the world, not by delegation, but in his own right. He is not an under God, as the Arians suppose, but, to all intents and purposes, supreme God.

And yet in the same person is found the greatest spirit of obedience to the commands and laws of God that ever was in the universe; which was manifest in his obedience here in this world. John xiv. 31. "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." John xv. 10. "Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." The greatness of his obedience appears in its perfection, and in his obeying commands of such exceeding difficulty. Never any one received commands from God of such difficulty, and that were so great a trial of obedience, as Jesus Christ. One of God's commands to him was, that he should yield himself to those dreadful sufferings that he underwent. See John x. 18. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."—"This commandment received I of my Father." And Christ was throughly obedient to this command of God. Heb. v. 8. "Though he were a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things that he suffered." Philip. ii. 8. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Never was there such an instance

of obedience in man or angel as this, though he was at the same time supreme Lord of both angels and men.

6. In the person of Christ are conjoined absolute *sovereignty* and perfect *resignation*. This is another unparalleled conjunction. Christ, as he is God, is the absolute sovereign of the world; the sovereign disposer of all events. The decrees of God are all his sovereign decrees; and the work of creation, and all God's works of providence, are his sovereign works. It is he that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Col. i. 16, 17. "By him, and through him, and to him, are all things." John v. 17. "The Father worketh thereto, and I work." Matth. viii. 3. "I will, be thou clean."

But yet Christ was the most wonderful instance of resignation that ever appeared in the world. He was absolutely and perfectly resigned when he had a near and immediate prospect of his terrible sufferings, and the dreadful cup that he was to drink. The idea and expectation of this made his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and put him into such an agony, that his sweat was as it were great drops or clots of blood, falling down to the ground. But in such circumstances he was wholly resigned to the will of God. Matth. xxvi. 39. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Verse 42. "O my Father if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

7. In Christ do meet together *self-sufficiency*, and an entire *trust* and reliance on God; which is another conjunction peculiar to the person of Christ. As he is a divine person, he is self-sufficient, standing in need of nothing. All creatures are dependent on him, but he is dependent on none, but is absolutely independent. His proceeding from the Father, in his eternal generation or filiation, argues no proper dependence on the *will* of the Father; for that proceeding was natural and *necessary*, and not arbitrary. But yet Christ entirely trusted in God: His enemies say that of him, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him," Matth. xxvii. 43. And the apostle testifies, 1 Pet. ii. 23. "That he committed himself to God."

III. Such diverse excellencies are expressed in him towards men, that otherwise would have seemed impossible to be exercised towards the same object; as particularly these three, justice, mercy, and truth. The same that are mentioned Psalm lxxxv. 10. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The strict justice of God, and even his revenging justice and that against the sins of men,

never was so gloriously manifested as in Christ. He manifested an infinite regard to the attribute of God's justice, in that, when he had a mind to save sinners, he was willing to undergo such extreme sufferings, rather than that their salvation should be to the injury of the honour of that attribute. And as he is the Judge of the world, he doth himself exercise strict justice; he will not clear the guilty, nor at all acquit the wicked in judgment. Yet how wonderfully is infinite mercy towards sinners displayed in him! And what glorious and ineffable grace and love have been, and are exercised by him, towards sinful men! Though he be the just Judge of a sinful world, yet he is also the Saviour of the world. Though he be a consuming fire to sin, yet he is the light and life of sinners. Rom. iii. 25, 26. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

So the immutable truth of God, in the threatnings of his law against the sins of men, was never so manifested as it is in Jesus Christ; for there never was any other so great a trial of the unalterableness of the truth of God in those threatenings, as when sin came to be imputed to his own Son. And then in Christ has been seen already an actual complete accomplishment of those threatenings, which never has been, nor will be seen in any other instance; because the eternity that will be taken up in fulfilling those threatenings on others, never will be finished. Christ manifested an infinite regard to this truth of God in his sufferings. And, in his judging the world, he makes the covenant of works, that contains those dreadful threatenings, his rule of judgment. He will see to it, that it is not infringed in the least jot or tittle: he will do nothing contrary to the threatenings of the law, and their complete fulfilment. And yet in him we have many great and precious promises, promises of perfect deliverance from the penalty of the law. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. And in him are all the promises of God, yea, and Amen.

Having thus shown wherein there is admirable conjunction of excellencies in Jesus Chrst, I now proceed,

Secondly, To shew how this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in Christ's *acts*.

1. It appears in what Christ did in taking on him our nature. In this act, his infinite condescension wonderfully ap-

peared, that he who was God should become man; that the word should be made flesh, and should take on him a nature infinitely below his original nature! And it appears yet more remarkably in the low circumstances of his incarnation: He was conceived in the womb of a poor young woman, whose poverty appeared in this, when she came to offer sacrifices of her purification, she brought what was allowed of in the law only in case of poverty; as Luke ii. 24.: "According to what is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons." This was allowed only in case the person was so poor that she was not able to offer a lamb. Levit. xii. 8.

And though his infinite condescension thus appeared in the manner of his incarnation, yet his divine dignity also appeared in it; for though he was conceived in the womb of a poor virgin, yet he was conceived there by the power of the Holy Ghost. And his divine dignity also appeared in the holiness of his conception and birth. Though he was conceived in the womb of one of the corrupt race of mankind, yet he was conceived and born without sin; as the angel said to the blessed Virgin, Luke i. 35. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

His infinite condescension marvellously appeared in the manner of his birth. He was brought forth in a stable, because there was no room for them in the inn. The inn was taken up by others, that were looked upon as persons of greater account. The blessed Virgin, being poor and despised, was turned or shut out. Though she was in such necessitous circumstances, yet those that counted themselves her betters would not give place to her; and therefore, in the time of her travail, she was forced to betake herself to a stable; and when the child was born, it was wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger. There Christ lay a little infant; and there he eminently appeared as a lamb. But yet this feeble infant, born thus in a stable, and laid in a manger, was born to conquer and triumph over Satan, that roaring lion. He came to subdue the mighty powers of darkness, and make a shew of them openly; and so to restore peace on earth, and to manifest God's good-will towards men, and to bring glory to God in the highest; according as the end of his birth was declared by the joyful songs of the glorious hosts of angels appearing to the shepherds at the same time that the infant lay in the manger; whereby his divine dignity was manifested.

II. This admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in the acts and various passages of Christ's life. Though Christ dwelt in mean outward circumstances, whereby his condescension and humility especially appeared, and his majesty was veiled; yet his divine dignity and glory did in many of his acts shine through the veil, and it illustriously appeared, that he was not only the Son of man, but the great God.

Thus, in the circumstances of his infancy, his outward meanness appeared; yet there was something then to shew forth his divine dignity, in the wise men's being stirred up to come from the east to give honour to him, their being led by a miraculous star, and coming and falling down and worshipping him, and presenting him with gold, frankincence, and myrrh. His humility and meekness wonderfully appeared in his subjection to his mother and reputed father when he was a child. Herein he appeared as a lamb. But his divine glory broke forth and shone when, at twelve years old, he disputed with doctors in the temple. In that he appeared, in some measure, as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah.*

And so, after he entered on his public ministry, his marvellous humility and meekness was manifested in his choosing to appear in such mean outward circumstances: and in being contented in them, when he was so poor that he had not where to lay his head, and depended on the charity of some of his followers for his subsistence; as appears by Luke viii. at the beginning. How meek, condescending, and familiar his treatment of his disciples; his discourses with them, treating them as a father his children; yea, as friends and companions. How patient, bearing such affliction and reproach, and so many injuries from the scribes and pharisees, and others. In these things he appeared *as a Lamb.* And yet he at the same time did in many ways shew forth his divine majesty and glory, particularly in the miracles he wrought, which were evidently divine works, and manifested omnipotent power, and so declared him to be *the Lion of the tribe of Judah.* His wonderful and miraculous works plainly shewed him to be the God of nature; in that it appeared by them that he had all nature in his hands, and could lay an arrest upon it, and stop and change its course as he pleased. In healing the sick, and opening the eyes of the blind, and unstopping the ears of the deaf, and healing the lame; he shewed that he was the God that framed the eye, and created the ear, and was the author of the frame of man's body. By the dead's rising at his command, it appeared that he was the author and fountain of life, and that "God the Lord, to whom belong the

issues from death." By his walking on the sea in a storm, when the waves were raised, he shewed himself to be that God spoken of in Job ix. 8. "That treadeth on the waves of the sea." By his stilling the storm, and calming the rage of the sea, by his powerful command, saying, "Peace, be still," he shewed that he has the command of the universe, and that God who brings things to pass by the word of his power, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast; Psalm lxv. 7. "Who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves." And Psalm cvii. 29. "That maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." And Psalm lxxxix. 8, 9. "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them." Christ, by casting out devils, remarkably appeared as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*, and showed that he was stronger than the roaring lion, that seeks whom he may devour. He commanded them to come out, and they were forced to obey. They were terribly afraid of him; they fall down before him, and beseech him not to torment them. He forces a whole legion of them to forsake their hold, by his powerful word; and they could not so much as enter into the swine without his leave. He shewed the glory of his omniscience, by telling the thoughts of men; as we have often an account. Herein he appeared to be that God spoken of, Amos iv. 13. "That declareth unto man what is his thought." Thus, in the midst of his meanness and humiliation, his divine glory appeared in his miracles, John ii. 11. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory."

And though Christ ordinarily appeared without outward glory, and in great obscurity, yet at a certain time he threw off the veil, and appeared in his divine majesty, so far as it could be outwardly manifested to men in this frail state, when he was transfigured in the mount. The apostle Peter, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17. was an "eye witness of his majesty, when he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; which voice that came from heaven they heard, when they were with him in the holy mount."

And at the same time that Christ was wont to appear in such meekness, condescension, and humility, in his familiar discourses with his disciples, appearing therein as the Lamb of God; he was also wont to appear as *The Lion of the tribe of Judah*, with divine authority and majesty, in his so sharply rebuking the scribes and pharisees, and other hypocrites.

III. This admirable conjunction of excellencies remarkably appears in his offering up himself a sacrifice for sinners in his last sufferings. As this was the greatest thing in all the works of redemption, the greatest act of Christ in that work; so in this act especially does there appear that admirable conjunction of excellencies that has been spoken of. Christ never so much appeared as a lamb, as when he was slain: "He came like a lamb to the slaughter," Isaiah liii. 7. Then he was offered up to God as a lamb without blemish, and without spot: Then especially did he appear to be the anti-type of the lamb of the passover: 1 Cor. v. 7. "Christ our Passover sacrificed for us." And yet in that act he did in an especial manner appear as "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah*;" yea, in this above all other acts, in many respects, as may appear in the following things.

1. Then was Christ in the greatest degree of his humiliation, and yet by that, above all other things, his divine glory appears. Christ's humiliation was great, in being born in such a low condition, of a poor virgin, and in a stable. His humiliation was great, in being subject to Joseph the carpenter, and Mary his mother, and afterwards living in poverty, so as not to have where to lay his head; and in suffering such manifold and bitter reproaches as he suffered, while he went about preaching and working miracles. But his humiliation was never so great as it was in his last sufferings, beginning with his agony in the garden, till he expired on the cross. Never was he subject to such ignominy as then; never did he suffer so much pain in his body, or so much sorrow in his soul; never was he in so great an exercise of his condescension, humility, meekness, and patience, as he was in these last sufferings; never was his divine glory and majesty covered with so thick and dark a veil; never did he so empty himself and make himself of no reputation, as at this time. And yet, never was his divine glory so manifested, by any act of his, as in yielding himself up to these sufferings. When the fruit of it came to appear, and the mystery and ends of it to be unfolded in its issue, then did the glory of it appear; then didit appear as the most glorious act of Christ that ever he exercised towards the creature. This act of his is celebrated by the angels and hosts of heaven with peculiar praises, as that which is above all others glorious, as you may see in the context, (ver. 9, &c.) "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of

every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

2. He never in any act gave so great a manifestation of love to God, and yet never so manifested his love to those that were enemies to God, as in that act. Christ never did any thing whereby his love to the Father was so eminently manifested, as in his laying down his life, under such inexpressible sufferings, in obedience to his command, and for the vindication of the honour of his authority and majesty; nor did ever any mere creature give such a testimony of love to God as that was. And yet this was the greatest expression of his love to sinful men, who were enemies to God; Rom. v. 10. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son." The greatness of Christ's love to such, appears in nothing to much as in its being dying love. That blood of Christ which fell in great drops to the ground, in his agony, was shed from love to God's enemies, and his own. That shame and spitting, that torment of body, and that exceeding sorrow, even unto death, which he endured in his soul, was what he underwent from love to rebels against God, to save them from hell, and to purchase for them eternal glory. Never did Christ so eminently shew his regard to God's honour, as in offering up himself a victim to justice. And yet in this above all, he manifested his love to them who dishonoured God, so as to bring such guilt on themselves, that nothing less than his blood could atone for it.

3. Christ never so eminently appeared *for* divine justice, and yet never suffered so much *from* divine justice, as when he offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins. In Christ's great sufferings, did his infinite regard to the honour of God's justice distinguishingly appear; for it was from regard to *that* that he thus humbled himself. And yet in these sufferings, Christ was the mark of the vindictive expressions of that very justice of God. Revenging justice then spent all its force upon him, on account of our guilt; which made him sweat blood, and cry out upon the cross, and probably rent his vitals—broke his heart, the fountain of blood, or some other blood vessels—and

by the violent fermentation turned his blood to water. For the blood and water that issued out of his side, when pierced by the spear, seems to have been extravasated blood ; and so there might be a kind of literal fulfilment of Psalm xxii. 14. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint : my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels." And this was the way and means by which Christ stood up for the honour of God's justice, viz. by thus suffering its terrible executions. For when he had undertaken for sinners, and had substituted himself in their room, divine justice could have its due honour no other way than by his suffering its revenges.— In this the diverse excellencies that met in the person of Christ appeared, viz his infinite regard to God's justice, and such love to those that have exposed themselves to it, as induced him thus to yield himself a sacrifice to it.

4 Christ's holiness never so illustriously shone forth as it did in his last sufferings ; and yet he never was to such a degree treated as guilty. Christ's holiness never had such a trial as it had then ; and therefore never had so great a manifestation. When it was tried in this furnace, it came forth as gold, or as silver purified seven times. His holiness then above all appeared in his stedfast pursuit of the honour of God, and in his obedience to him. For his yielding himself unto death was transcendently the greatest act of obedience that ever was paid to God by any one since the foundation of the world.

And yet then Christ was in the greatest degree treated as a wicked person would have been. He was apprehended and bound as a malefactor. His accusers represented him as a most wicked wretch. In his sufferings before his crucifixion, he was treated as if he had been the worst and vilest of mankind ; and then, he was put to a kind of death, that none but the worst sort of malefactors were wont to suffer, those that were most abject in their persons, and guilty of the blackest crimes. And he suffered as though guilty from God himself, by reason of our guilt imputed to him ; for he who knew no sin ; was made sin for us, he was made subject to wrath, as if he had been sinful himself. He was made a curse for us.

Christ never so greatly manifested his hatred of sin, as against God, as in his dying to take away the dishonour that sin had done to God ; and yet never was he to such a degree subject to the terrible effects of God's hatred of sin, and wrath against it, as he was then. In this appears those diverse excellencies meeting in Christ, viz. love to God, and grace to sinners.

5. He never was so dealt with, as unworthy, as in his last sufferings; and yet it is chiefly on account of them that he is accounted worthy. He was therein dealt with as if he had not been worthy to live: They cry out, "Away with him? Away with him! Crucify him." John xix. 15. And they prefer Barabbas before him. And he suffered from the Father, as one whose demerits were infinite, by reason of our demerits that were laid upon him. And yet it was especially by that act of his subjecting himself to those sufferings, that he merited, and on the account of which chiefly he was accounted worthy of the glory of his exaltation. Philip. ii. 8, 9. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death; wherefore God hath highly exalted him. And we see that it is on this account chiefly, that he is extolled as worthy by saints and angels in the context; "worthy," say they, "is the Lamb that was slain." This shews an admirable conjunction in him of infinite dignity, and infinite condescension and love to the infinitely unworthy.

6. Christ in his last sufferings suffered most extremely from those towards whom he was then manifesting his greatest act of love. He never suffered so much from his Father, (though not from any hatred to him, but from hatred to our sins), for he then *forsook* him, or took away the comforts of his presence; and then "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief," as Isaiah liii. 10. And yet never gave so great a manifestatation of love to God as then, as has been already observed. So Christ never suffered so much from the hands of men as he did then; and yet never was in so high an exercise of love to men. He never was so ill treated by his disciples; who were so unconcerned about his sufferings, that they would not watch with him one hour, in his agony; and when he was apprehended, all forsook him and fled, except Peter, who denied him with oaths and curses. And yet then he was suffering, shedding his blood, and pouring out his soul unto death for them. Yea, he probably was then shedding his blood for some of them that shed his blood; for whom he prayed for, while they were crucifying him; and were probably afterwards brought home to Christ by Peter's preaching. (Compare Luke xxiii. 34. Acts ii. 23, 36, 37, 41. and chap iii. 17. and chap. iv. 4. This shews an admirable meeting of justice and grace in the redemption of Christ,

7. It was in Christ's last sufferings, above all, that he was delivered up to the power of his enemies; and yet by these, above all, he obtained victory over his enemies. Christ never

was so in his enemies hands, as in the time of his last sufferings. They sought his life before; but from time to time they were restrained, and Christ escaped out of their hands; and this reason is given for it, that *his time was not yet come.* But now they were suffered to work their will upon him; he was in a great degree delivered up to the malice and cruelty of both wicked men and devils. And therefore when Christ's enemies came to apprehend him, he says to them, Luke xxii. 53. "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me: But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

And yet it was principally by means of those sufferings that he conquered and overthrew his enemies. Christ never so effectually bruised Satan's head, as when Satan bruised his heel. The weapon with which Christ warred against the devil, and obtained a most complete victory and glorious triumph over him, was the cross, the instrument and weapon with which he thought he had overthrown Christ, and brought on him shameful destruction. Col. ii. 14, 15. "Blotting out the hand writing of ordinances,—nailing it to his cross: And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." In his last sufferings, Christ sapped the very foundations of Satan's kingdom; he conquered his enemies in their own territories, and beat them with their own weapons; as David cut off Goliah's head with his own sword. The devil had as it were, swallowed up Christ, as the whale did Jonah; but it was deadly poison to him; he gave him a mortal wound in his own bowels. He was soon sick of his morsel, and was forced to do by him as the whale did by Jonah. To this day he is heart-sick of what he then swallowed as his prey. In those sufferings of Christ was laid the foundation of all that glorious victory he has already obtained over Satan, in the overthrow of his Heathenish kingdom in the Roman empire, and all the success the gospel has had since; and also of all his future and still more glorious victory that is to be obtained in the earth. Thus Sampson's riddle is most eminently fulfilled, Judges xiv. 14. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." And thus the true Sampson does more towards the destruction of his enemies at his death than in his life; in yielding up himself to death, he pulls down the temple of Dagon, and destroys many thousands of his enemies, even while they are making themselves sport in his sufferings; and so he whose type was the ark, pulls down Dagon, and breaks off his head and hands in his own temple, even while he is brought in there as Dagon's captive.

Thus Christ appeared at the same time, and in the same act, as both a lion and a lamb. He appeared as a lamb in the hands of his cruel enemies; as a lamb in the paws, and between the devouring jaws of a roaring lion; yea, he was a lamb actually slain by this lion: And yet at the same time, as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*, he conquers and triumphs over Satan, destroying his own devourer; as Sampson did the lion that roared upon him, when he rent him as he would a kid. And in nothing has Christ appeared so much as a lion, in glorious strength destroying his enemies, as when he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter. in his greatest weakness he was most strong; and when he suffered most from his enemies, he brought the greatest confusion on his enemies.——Thus this admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies was manifest in Christ, in his offering up himself to God in his last sufferings.

IV. It is still manifest in his acts, in his present state of exaltation in heaven. Indeed, in his exalted state, he most eminently appears in manifestation of those excellencies, on the account of which he is compared to a lion; but still he appears as a lamb; Rev. xiv. 1. "And I looked, and lo, a Lion stood on Mount Sion;" as in his state of humiliation he chiefly appeared as a lamb, and yet did not appear without manifestation of his divine majesty and power, as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah.* Though Christ be now at the right-hand of God, exalted as King of heaven, aad Lord of the universe; yet as he still is in the human nature, he still excels in humility. Though the man Christ Jesus be the highest of all creatures in heaven, yet he as much excels them all in humility as he doth in glory and dignity; for none sees so much of the distance between God and him as he does. And though he now appears in such glorious majesty and dominion in heaven, yet he appears as a lamb in his condescending, mild, and sweet treatment, of his saints there; for he is a Lamb still, even amidst the throne of his exaltation; and he that is the shepherd of the whole flock is himself a Lamb, and goes before them in heaven as such. Rev. vii. 17. "For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Though in heaven every knee bows to him, and though the angels fall down before him adoring him, yet he treats his saints with infinite condescention, mildness, and endearment. And in his acts towards the saints on earth, he still appears as a Lamb, manifesting exceeding love and tenderness in his intercession for

them, as one that has had experience of affliction and temptation. He has not forgot what these things are; nor has he forgot how to pity those that are subject to them. And he still manifests his Lamb-like excellencies, in his dealings with his saints on earth, in admirable forbearance, love, gentleness, and compassions. Behold him instructing, supplying, supporting, and comforting them; often coming to them, and manifesting himself to them by his Spirit, that he may sup with them, and they with him. Behold him admitting them to sweet communion, enabling them with boldness and confidence to come to him, and solacing their hearts. And in heaven Christ still appears, as it were, with the marks of his wounds upon him; and so appears as a Lamb as it had been slain; as he was represented in vision to St. John in the text, when he appeared to open the book sealed with seven seals, which is part of the glory of his exaltation.

5. And, *lastly*, this admirable conjunction of excellencies will be manifest in Christ's acts at the last judgment. He then, above all other times, will appear as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah* in infinite greatness and majesty, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels, and the earth shall tremble before him, and the hills shall melt. This is he, (Rev. xx. 11.) "that shall sit on a great white throne, before whose face the earth and heaven shall flee away." He will then appear in the most dreadful and amazing manner to the wicked. The devils tremble at the thought of that appearance; and when it shall be, the kings and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, to hide them from the face and wrath of the Lamb. And none can declare or conceive of the amazing manifestations of wrath in which he will then appear towards these; or the trembling and astonishment, the shrieking and gnashing of teeth, with which they shall stand before his judgement-seat, and receive the terrible sentence of his wrath.

And yet he will at the same time appear as a Lamb to his saints; he will receive them as friends and brethren, treating them with infinite mildness and love. There shall be nothing in him terrible to them; but towards them he will cloath himself wholly with sweetness and endearment. The church shall be then admitted to him as his bride; that shall be her wedding day. The saints shall all be sweetly invited to come with him to inherit the kingdom, and reign in it with him to all eternity.

APPLICATION.

I. From this doctrine we may learn one reason why Christ is called by such a variety of names, and held forth under such a variety of representations in Scripture. It is the better to signify and exhibit to us that variety of excellencies that meet together, and are conjoined in him. Many appellations are mentioned together in one verse, Isaiah ix. 6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." It shews a wonderful conjunction of excellencies, that the same person should be a Son, born and given, and yet be the everlasting Father, without beginning or end; that he should be a Child, and yet be he whose name is Counseller, and the mighty God; and well may his name, in whom such things are conjoined, be called Wonderful.

By reason of the same wonderful conjunction, Christ is represented by a great variety of sensible things, that are on some account excellent. Thus in some places he is called a Sun, as Mal. iv. 2. in others a Star, Numb. xxiv. 17. And he is especially represented by the Morning-star, as being that which excels all other stars in brightness, and is the forerunner of the day, Rev. xxii. 16. And, as in our text, he is compared to a lion in one verse, and a lamb in the next, so sometimes he is compared to a roe or a young hart, another creature most diverse from a lion. So in some places he is called a rock, in others he is compared to a pearl. In some places he is called a man of war, and the Captain of our Salvation, in other places he is represented as a bridegroom. In the second chapter of Canticles, the 1st verse, he is compared to a rose and lily, that are sweet and beautiful flowers; in the next verse but one, he is compared to a tree bearing sweet fruit. In Isaiah liii. 2. he is called a Root out of a dry ground; but elsewhere, instead of that, he is called the Tree of Life, that grows (not in a dry or barren ground, but) "in the midst of the paradise of God," Rev. ii. 7.

II. Let the consideration of this wonderful meeting of diverse excellencies in Christ induce you to accept of him, and close with him as your Saviour. As all manner of excellencies meet in him, so there are concurring in him all manner of

arguments and motives, to move you to choose him for your Saviour, and every thing that tends to encourage poor sinners to come and put their trust in him: His fulness and all-sufficiency as a Saviour gloriously appear in that variety of excellencies that has been spoken of.

Fallen man is in a state of exceeding great misery, and is helpless in it; he is a poor weak creature, like an infant cast out in its blood in the day that it is born. But Christ is *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*; he is strong, though we are weak; he hath prevailed to do that for us which no creature else could do. Fallen man is a mean despicable creature, a contemptible worm; but Christ, who has undertaken for us, is infinitely honourable and worthy. Fallen man is polluted, but Christ is infinitely holy; fallen man is hateful, but Christ is infinitely lovely; fallen man is the object of God's indignation, but Christ is infinitely dear to him. We have dreadfully provoked God, but Christ has performed that righteousness which is infinitely precious in God's eyes.

And here is not only infinite strength and infinite worthiness, but infinite condescension, and love and mercy, as great as power and dignity. If you are a poor, distressed sinner, whose heart is ready to sink for fear that God never will have mercy on you, you need not be afraid to go to Christ, for fear that he is either unable or unwilling to help you. Here is a strong foundation, and an inexhaustible treasure, to answer the necessities of your poor soul; and here is infinite grace and gentleness to invite and embolden a poor, unworthy, fearful soul to come to it. If Christ accepts of you, you need not fear but that you will be safe; for he is a strong Lion for your defence. And if you come, you need not fear but that you shall be accepted; for he is like a Lamb to all that come to him, and receives them with infinite grace and tenderness. It is true he has awful majesty; he is the great God, and infinitely high above you; but there is this to encourage and embolden the poor sinner, that Christ is man as well as God; he is a creature, as well as the Creator; and he is the most humble and lowly in heart of any creature in heaven or earth. This may well make the poor unworthy creature bold in coming to him. You need not hesitate one moment; but may run to him, and cast yourself upon him. You will certainly be graciously and meekly received by him. Though he is a lion, he will only be a lion to your enemies; but he will be a lamb to you. It could not have been conceived, had it not been so in

the person of Christ, that there could have been so much in any Saviour, that is inviting, and tending to encourage sinners to trust in him. Whatever your circumstances are, you need not be afraid to come to such a Saviour as this. Be you never so wicked a creature, here is worthiness enough; be you never so poor, and mean, and ignorant a creature, there is no danger of being despised; for though he be so much greater than you, he is also immensely more humble than you. Any one of you that is a father or mother, will not despise one of your own children that comes to you in distress; much less danger is there of Christ despising you, if you in your heart come to him. Here let me a little expostulate with the poor, burdened, distressed soul.

1. What are you afraid of, that you dare not venture your soul upon Christ? Are you afraid that he cannot save you; that he is not strong enough to conquer the enemies of your soul? But how can you desire one stronger than the "mighty God?" as Christ is called, Isai. ix 6. Is there need of greater than infinite strength? Are you afraid that he will not be willing to stoop so low as to take any gracious notice of you? But then, look on him, as he stood in the ring of soldiers, exposing his blessed face to be buffeted and spit upon by them! Behold him bound with his back uncovered to those that smote him! And behold him hanging on the cross! Do you think that he that had condescension enough to stoop to these things, and that for his crucifiers, will be unwilling to accept of you if you come to him? Or, are you afraid that if he does accept of you, that God the Father will not accept of him for you? But consider, will God reject his own Son, in whom his infinite delight is, and has been, from all eternity, and who is so united to him, that if he should reject him he would reject himself?

2. What is there that you can desire should be in a Saviour, that is not in Christ? Or, Wherein should you desire a Saviour should be otherwise than Christ is? What excellency is there wanting? What is there that is great or good? What is there that is venerable or winning? What is there that is adorable or endearing? Or, what can you think of that would be encouraging, which is not to be found in the person of Christ? Would you have your Saviour to be great and honourable, because you are not willing to be beholden to a mean person? And, is not Christ a person honourable enough to be worthy that you should be dependant on him; Is he not a person high enough to be appointed to so honourable a work as

your salvation? Would you not only have a Saviour of high degree, but would you have him, notwithstanding his exaltation and dignity, to be made also of low degree, that he might have experience of afflictions and trials, that he might learn by the things that he has suffered, to pity them that suffer and are tempted? And has not Christ been made low enough for you? And has he not suffered enough? Would you not only have him possess experience of the afflictions you now suffer, but also of that amazing wrath that you fear hereafter, that he may know how to pity those that are in danger, and afraid of it? This Christ has had experience of, which experience gave him a greater sense of it, a thousand times, than you have, or any man living has. Would you have your Saviour to be one who is near to God, that so his mediation might be prevalent with him? And can you desire him to be nearer to God than Christ is, who is his only begotten Son, of the same essence with the Father? And would you not only have him near to God, but also near to you, that you may have free access to him? And would you have him nearer to you than to be in the same nature, united to you by a spiritual union, so close as to be fitly represented by the union of the wife to the husband, of the branch to the vine, of the member to the head; yea, so as to be one spirit? For so he will be united to you, if you accept of him. Would you have a Saviour that has given some great and extraordinary testimony of mercy and love to sinners, by something that he has done, as well as by what he says?—And can you think or conceive of greater things than Christ has done? Was it not a great thing for him, who was God, to take upon him human nature; to be not only God, but man thenceforward to all eternity? But would you look upon suffering for sinners to be a yet greater testimony of love to sinners, than merely doing, though it be never so extraordinary a thing that he has done? And would you desire that a Saviour should suffer more than Christ has suffered for sinners? What is there wanting, or what would you add if you could, to make him more fit to be your Saviour? But further, to induce you to accept of Christ as your Saviour, consider two things particularly.

1. How much Christ appears as the Lamb of God in his invitations to you to come to him and trust in him. With what sweet grace and kindness does he, from time to time, call and invite you; as Prov. viii. 4. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And Isaiah lv. 1, 2, 3. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that

hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." How gracious is he here in inviting every one that thirsts, and in so repeating his invitation over and over, "Come ye to the waters; come, buy and eat, yea, come!" Mark the excellency of that entertainment which he invites you to accept of, "Come, buy wine and milk!" your poverty, having nothing to pay for it, shall be no objection, "Come, he that hath no money, come without money, and without price!" What gracious arguments and expostulations he uses with you! "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." As much as to say, It is altogether needless for you to continue labouring and toiling for that which can never serve your turn, seeking rest in the world, and in your own righteousness:—I have made abundant provision for you, of that which is really good, and will fully satisfy your desires, and answer your end, and stand ready to accept of you: You need not be afraid; if you will come to me, I will engage to see all your wants supplied, and you made an happy creature. As he promises in the third verse, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." And so, Prov. ix. at the beginning. How gracious and sweet is the invitation there! "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither;" let you be never so poor, ignorant, and blind a creature, you shall be welcome. And in the following words, Christ sets forth the provision that he has made for you, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." You are in a poor famishing state, and have nothing wherewith to feed your perishing soul; you have been seeking something, but yet remain destitute. Hearken, how Christ calls you to eat of his bread, and to drink of the wine that he hath mingled! And how much like a lamb does Christ appear in Matth. xi. 28—30. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." O thou poor distressed soul! whoever thou art, consider that Christ mentions thy very case, when he calls to them who labour and are heavy laden! How he repeatedly promises you rest if you come to him! In the 28th verse he says, "I will give you rest." And in the 29th verse, "ye shall find rest to

your souls." This is what you want. This is the thing you have been so long in vain seeking after. O how sweet would rest be to you, if you could but obtain it! Come to Christ, and you shall obtain it. And hear how Christ, to encourage you, represents himself as a lamb! He tells you, that he is meek and lowly in heart; and are you afraid to come to such a one? And again, Rev. iii. 20. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me." Christ condescends not only to call you to him, but he comes to you; he comes to your door, and there knocks. He might send an officer and seize you as a rebel and vile malefactor; but instead of that, he comes and knocks at your door, and seeks that you would receive him into your house, as your friend and Saviour. And he not only knocks at your door, but he stands there waiting, while you are backward and unwilling. And not only so, but he makes promises what he will do for you, if you will admit him, what privileges he will admit you to; he will "sup with you, and you with him." And again, Rev. xxii. 16, 17. "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come: And let him that heareth, say, come: And let him that is athirst, come: And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." How does Christ here graciously set before you his own winning attractive excellency! And how does he condescend to declare to you not only his own invitation, but the invitation of the Spirit and the bride, if by any means he might encourage you to come! And how does he invite every one that will, that they may "take of the waters of life freely," that they may take it a free gift, however precious it be, and though it be the water of life!

2. If you do come to Christ, he will appear as a Lion, in his glorious power and dominion, to defend you. All those excellencies of his, in which he appears as a Lion, shall be yours, and shall be employed for you in your defence, for your safety, and to promote your glory; he will be as a lion to fight against your enemies. He that touches you, or offends you, will provoke his wrath, as he that stirs up a lion. Unless your enemies can conquer this Lion, they shall not be able to destroy or hurt you; unless they are stronger than he, they shall not be able to hinder your happiness. Isaiah xxxi. 4. "For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice,

nor abase himself for the noise of them; so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof."

III. Let what has been said be improved to induce you to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and choose him for your friend and portion. As there is such an admirable meeting of diverse excellencies in Christ, so there is every thing in him to render him worthy of your love and choice, and to win and engage it. Whatsoever there is or can be desirable in a friend, is in Christ, and that to the highest degree that can be desired.

Would you choose for a friend a person of great dignity? It is a thing taking with men to have those for their friends who are much above them; because they look upon themselves honoured by the friendship of such. Thus, how taking would it be with an inferior maid to be the object of the dear love of some great and excellent prince. But Christ is infinitely above you, and above all the princes of the earth; for he is the King of kings. So honourable a person as this offers himself to you, in the nearest and dearest friendship.

And would you choose to have a friend not only great but good? In Christ infinite greatness and infinite goodness meet together, and receive lustre and glory one from another. His greatness is rendered lovely by his goodness. The greater any one is without goodness, so much the greater evil; but when infinite goodness is joined with greatness, it renders it a glorious and adorable greatness. So, on the other hand, his infinite goodness receives lustre from his greatness. He that is of great understanding and ability, and is withal of a good and excellent disposition, is deservedly more esteemed than a lower and lesser being, with the same kind inclination and good will. Indeed goodness is excellent in whatever subject it be found; it is beauty and excellency itself, and renders all excellent that are possessed of it; and yet more excellent when joined with greatness. The very same excellent qualities of gold render the body in which they are inherent more precious, and of greater value, when joined with greater than when with lesser dimensions. And how glorious is the sight, to see him who is the great Creator and supreme Lord of heaven and earth, full of condescension, tender pity and mercy, towards the mean and unworthy! His almighty power, and infinite majesty and self-sufficiency, render his exceeding love and grace the more surprising. And how do his condescension and compassions endear his majesty, power, and dominion, and

render those attributes pleasant, that would otherwise be only terrible! Would you not desire that your friend, though great and honourable, should be of such condescension and grace, and so to have the way opened to free access to him, that his exaltation above you might not hinder your free enjoyment of his friendship?—And would you chuse not only that the infinite greatness and majesty of your friend should be, as it were, mollified and sweetened with condescension and grace; but would you also desire to have your friend brought nearer to you? Would you chuse a friend far above you, and yet as it were upon a level with you too? Though it be taking with men to have a near and dear friend of superior dignity, yet there is also an inclination in them to have their friend a sharer with them in circumstances. Thus is Christ. Though he be the great God, yet he has, as it were, brought himself down to be upon a level with you, so as to become man as you are, that he might not only be your Lord, but your brother, and that he might be the more fit to be a companion for such a worm of the dust. This is one end of Christ's taking upon him man's nature, that his people might be under advantages for a more familiar converse with him, than the infinite distance of the divine nature would allow of. And upon this account the church longed for Christ's incarnation, Cant. viii. 1. "O that thou wert my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee, yea, I should not be despised." One design of God in the gospel, is to bring us to make God the object of our undivided respect, that he may engross our regard every way, that whatever natural inclination there is in our souls, he may be the center of it; that God may be all in all. But there is an inclination in the creature, not only to the adoration of a Lord and Sovereign, but to complacence in some one as a friend, to love and delight in some one that may be conversed with as a companion. And virtue and holiness do not destroy or weaken this inclination of our nature. But so hath God contrived in the affair of our redemption, that a divine person may be the object even of this inclination of our nature. And in order hereto, such an one is come down to us, and has taken our nature, and is become one of us, and calls himself our friend, brother, and companion. Psalm cxxii. 8. "For my brethren and companions' sake, will I now say, Peace be within thee."

But is it not enough in order to invite and encourage you to free access to a friend so great and high, that he is one of infinite condescending grace, and also has taken your own

nature, and is become man? But would you, further to embolden and win you, have him a man of wonderful meekness and humility? Why, such an one is Christ! He is not only become man for you, but far the meekest and most humble of all men, the greatest instance of these sweet virtues that ever was, or will be. And besides these, he has all other human excellencies in the highest perfection. These, indeed, are no proper addition to his divine excellencies. Christ has no more excellency in his person, since his incarnation, than he had before; for divine excellency is infinite, and cannot be added to. Yet his human excellencies are additional *manifestations* of his glory and excellency to us, and are additional recommendations of him to our esteem and love, who are of finite comprehension. Though his human excellencies are but communications and reflections of his divine; and though this light, as reflected, falls infinitely short of the divine fountain of light in its immediate glory; yet the reflection shines not without its proper advantages, as presented to our view and affection. The glory of Christ in the qualifications of his human nature, appears to us in excellencies that are of our own kind, and are exercised in our own way and manner; and so, in some respects, are peculiarly fitted to invite our acquaintance and draw our affection. The glory of Christ as it appears in his divinity, though far brighter, more dazzles our eyes, and exceeds the strength of our sight or our comprehension: But as it shines in the human excellencies of Christ, it is brought more to a level with our conceptions, and suitableness to our nature and manner, yet retaining a semblance of the same divine beauty, and a savour of the same divine sweetness. But as both divine and human excellencies meet together in Christ, they set off and recommend each other to us. It tends to endear the divine majesty and holiness of Christ to us, that these are attributes of one in our nature, one of us, who is become our brother, and is the meekest and humblest of men. It encourages us to look upon these divine perfections, however high and great; since we have some near concern in, and liberty freely to enjoy them. And on the other hand, how much more glorious and surprising do the meekness, the humility, obedience, resignation, and other human excellencies of Christ appear, when we consider that they are in so great a person, as the eternal Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth!

By your chusing Christ for your friend and portion, you will obtain these two infinite benefits.

1. Christ will give himself to you, with all those various excellencies that meet in him, to your full and everlasting enjoyment. He will ever after treat you as his dear friend; and you shall ere long be where he is, and shall behold his glory, and dwell with him, in most free and intimate communion and enjoyment.

When the saints get to heaven, they shall not merely see Christ, and have to do with him as subjects and servants with a glorious and gracious Lord and sovereign, but Christ will entertain them as friends and brethren. This we may learn from the manner of Christ's conversing with his disciples here on earth: Though he was their Sovereign Lord, and did not refuse, but required, their supreme respect and adoration, yet he did not treat them as earthly sovereigns are wont to do their subjects. He did not keep them at an awful distance; but all along conversed with them with the most friendly familiarity, as a father amongst a company of children, yea, as with brethren. So he did with the twelve, and so he did with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He told his disciples, that he did not call them servants, but friends; and we read of one of them that leaned on his bosom: And doubtless he will not treat his disciples with less freedom and endearment in heaven. He will not keep them at a greater distance for his being in a state of exaltation; but he will rather take them into a state of exaltation with him. This will be the improvement Christ will make of his own glory, to make his beloved friends partakers with him, to glorify them in his glory, as he says to his Father, John xvii. 22, 23. "And the glory which thou hast given me, have I given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them," &c. We are to consider, that though Christ is greatly exalted, yet he is exalted, not as a private person for himself only, but as his people's head; he is exalted in their name, and upon their account, as the first fruits, and as representing the whole harvest. He is not exalted that he may be at a greater distance from them, but that they may be exalted with him. The exaltation and honour of the head is not to make a greater distance between the head and the members; but the members have the same relation and union with the head they had before, and are honoured with the head; and instead of the distance being greater, the union shall be nearer and more perfect. When believers get to heaven, Christ will conform them to himself; as he is set down in his Father's throne, so they shall sit down with him on his throne, and shall in their measure be made like him.

When Christ was going to heaven, he comforted his disciples with the thought, that after a while, he would come again and take them to himself, that they might be with him. And we are not to suppose that when the disciples got to heaven, they found him keeping a greater distance than he used to do. No, doubtless, he embraced them as friends, and welcomed them to his and their Father's house, and to his and their glory. They who had been his friends in this world, who had been together with him here, and had together partaken of sorrows and troubles, are now welcomed by him to rest, and to partake of glory with him. He took them and led them into his chambers, and shewed them all his glory; as he prayed, John xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me." And he led them to his living fountains of waters, and made them partake of his delights; as he prays, John xvii. 13. "That my joy may be fulfilled in themselves;" and set them down with him at his table in his kingdom, and made them partake with him of his dainties, according to his promise, Luke xxii. 30. and led them into his banqueting house, and made them to drink new wine with him in the kingdom of his heavenly Father; as he foretold them when he instituted the Lord's supper; Matt. xxvi. 29.

Yea, the saints' conversation with Christ in heaven shall not only be as intimate, and their access to him as free, as of the disciples on earth, but in many respects much more so; for in heaven, that vital union shall be perfect, which is exceeding imperfect here. While the saints are in this world, there are great remains of sin and darkness, to separate or disunite them from Christ, which shall then all be removed. This is not a time for that full acquaintance, and those glorious manifestations of love, which Christ designs for his people hereafter; which seems to be signified by his speech to Mary Magdalene, when ready to embrace him, when she met him after his resurrection; John xx. 17. "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father."

When the saints shall see Christ's glory and exaltation in heaven, it will indeed possess their hearts with the greater admiration and adoring respect, but will not awe them into any separation, but will serve only to heighten their surprise and joy, when they find Christ condescending to admit them to such intimate access, and so freely and fully communicating himself to them. So that if we chuse Christ for our friend and portion, we shall hereafter be so received to him, that there

shall be nothing to hinder the fullest enjoyment of him, to the satisfying the utmost cravings of our souls. We may take our full swing at gratifying our spiritual appetite after these holy pleasures. Christ will then say, as in Cant. v. 1. "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And this shall be our entertainment to all eternity! There shall never be any end of this happiness, or any thing to interrupt our enjoyment of it, or in the least to molest us in it!

2. By your being united to Christ, you will have a more glorious union with, and enjoyment of God the Father, than otherwise could be. For hereby the saints' relation to God becomes much nearer; they are the children of God in a higher manner than otherwise could be. For, being members of God's own Son, they are in a sort partakers of his relation to the Father: They are not only sons of God by regeneration, but by a kind of communion in the sonship of the eternal Son. This seems to be intended, Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The church is the daughter of God, not only as he hath begotten her by his word and Spirit, but as she is the spouse of his eternal Son.

So we being members of the Son, are partakers in our measure of the Father's love to the Son, and complacence in him. John, xvii. 23. "I in them, and thou in me,—Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." And, verse 26. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." And chap. xvi. 27. "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." So we shall, according to our capacities, be partakers of the Son's enjoyment of God, and have his joy fulfilled in ourselves, John xvii. 13. And by this means we shall come to an immensely higher, more intimate, and full enjoyment of God, than otherwise could have been. For there is doubtless an infinite intimacy between the Father and the Son; which is expressed by his being in the bosom of the Father. And saints being in him, shall, in their measure and manner, partake with him in it, and of the blessedness of it.

And thus is the affair of our redemption ordered, that thereby we are brought to an immensely more exalted kind of union with God, and enjoyment of him, both the Father and the Son, than otherwise could have been. For Christ being unit-

ed to the human nature, we have advantage for a more free and full enjoyment of him, than we could have had if he had remained only in the divine nature. So again, we being united to a divine person, as his members, can have a more intimate union and intercourse with God the Father, who is only in the divine nature, than otherwise could be. Christ, who is a divine person, by taking on him our nature, descends from the infinite distance and height above us, and is brought nigh to us; whereby we have advantage for the full enjoyment of him. And, on the other hand, we, by being in Christ a divine person, do as it were ascend up to God, through the infinite distance, and have hereby advantage for the full enjoyment of him also.

This was the design of Christ, that he, and his Father, and his people, might all be united in one. John xvii. 21—23. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Christ has brought it to pass, that those whom the Father has given him should be brought into the household of God; that he and his Father, and his people, should be as one society, one family; that the church should be as it were admitted into the society of the blessed Trinity.

TWO SERMONS:

I.

GOD GLORIFIED IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION, BY THE GREATNESS OF MAN'S DEPENDENCE UPON HIM IN THE WHOLE OF IT.

II.

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD.

JUDGES VII. 2.

Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE READER,

RESPECTING THE FIRST SERMON.

IT was with no small difficulty that the author's youth and modesty were prevailed on to let him appear a preacher in our public lecture, and afterwards to give us a copy of his discourse, at the desire of divers ministers and others who heard it. But as we quickly found him a workman that needs not to be ashamed before his brethren, our satisfaction was the greater to see him pitching upon so noble a subject, and treating it with so much strength and clearness, as the judicious reader will perceive in the following composure: A subject which secures to God his great design in the work of fallen man's redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ, which is evidently so laid out, as that the glory of the whole should return to him, the blessed ordainer, purchaser, and applier; a subject which enters deep into practical religion; without the belief of which, that must soon die in the hearts and lives of men.

For in proportion to the sense we have of our dependence on the sovereign God for all the good we want, will be our value for him, our application to him, our trust in him, our fear to offend him, and our care to please him; as likewise our gratitude and love, our delight and praise, upon our sensible experience of his free benefits.

In short, it is the very soul of piety, to apprehend and own that all our springs are in him; the springs of our present grace and comfort, and of our future glory and blessedness; and that they all entirely flow through Christ, by the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit. By these things saints live, and in all these things is the life of our spirits.

Such doctrines as these, which, by humbling the minds of men, prepare them for the exaltations of God, he has signally owned and prospered in the reformed world, and in our land especially, in the days of our forefathers; and we hope they will never grow unfashionable among us: For, we are well assured, if those which we call the doctrines of grace ever come to be contemned or disrelished, vital piety will proportionably languish and wear away; as these doctrines always sink in the esteem of men upon the decay of serious religion.

We cannot therefore but express our joy and thankfulness, that

the great Head of the church is pleased still to raise up from among the children of his people, for the supply of his churches, those who assert and maintain these evangelical principles; and that our churches (notwithstanding all their degeneracies) have still a high value for such principles, and for those who publicly own and teach them.

And as we cannot but wish and pray that the college in the neighbouring colony (as well as our own) may be a fruitful mother of many such sons as the author, by the blessing of Heaven on the care of their present worthy rector; so we heartily rejoice in the special favour of Providence in bestowing such a rich gift on the happy church of Northampton, which has for so many lustres of years flourished under the influence of such pious doctrines, taught them in the excellent ministry of their late venerable pastor, whose gift and spirit, we hope, will long live and shine in this his grandson, to the end that they may abound yet more in all the lovely fruits of evangelical humility and thankfulness, to the glory of God.

To his blessing we commit them all, with this Discourse, and every one that reads it; and are

Your Servants in the Gospel,

T. PRINCE.
W. COOPER.

Boston, August 17, 1731.

SERMON I.*

GOD GLORIFIED IN MAN'S DEPENDANCE.

1 Cor. 1. 29, 30, 31.

That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

THOSE Christians to whom the apostle directed this epistle, dwelt in a part of the world where human wisdom was in great repute; as the apostle observes in the 22d verse of this chapter, "The Greeks seek after wisdom." Corinth was not far from Athens, that had been for many ages the most famous seat of philosophy and learning in the world. The apostle therefore observes to them, how God by the gospel destroyed, and brought to nought, their wisdom. The learned Grecians, and their great philosophers, by all their wisdom did not know God, they were not able to find out the truth in divine things. But, after they had done their utmost to no effect, it pleased God at length to reveal himself by the gospel, which they accounted foolishness. He "chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things

* Preached on the Public Lecture in Boston, July 8, 1731; and published at the desire of several ministers and others in Boston who heard it.——This was the first piece published by Mr. Edwards.

which are not, to bring to nought the things that are." And the apostle informs them in the text why he thus did, *That no flesh should glory in his presence, &c.*——In which words may be observed,

1. What God aims at in the disposition of things in the affair of redemption, viz. that man should not glory in himself, but alone in God; *That no flesh should glory in his presence,—that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

2. How this end is attained in the work of redemption, viz. by that absolute and immediate dependance which men have upon God in that work, for all their good. Inasmuch as,

First, All the good that they have is in and through Christ; He *is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* All the good of the fallen and redeemed creature is concerned in these four things, and cannot be better distributed than into them: but Christ is each of them to us, and we have none of them any otherwise than in him. *He is made of God unto us wisdom:* In him are all the proper good and true excellency of the understanding. Wisdom was a thing that the Greeks admired; but Christ is the true light of the world; it is through him alone that true wisdom is imparted to the mind. It is in and by Christ that we have *righteousness;* It is by being in him that we are justified, have our sins pardoned, and are received as righteous into God's favour. It is by Christ that we have *sanctification:* We have in him true excellency of heart as well as of understanding; and he is made unto us inherent as well as imputed righteousness. It is by Christ that we have *redemption*, or the actual deliverance from all misery, and the bestowment of all happiness and glory. Thus we have all our good by Christ, who is God.

Secondly, Another instance wherein our dependance on God for all our good appears, is this, That it is God that has given us Christ, that we might have these benefits through him; he *of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, &c.*

Thirdly, It is of him that we are in Christ Jesus, and come to have an interest in him, and so do receive those blessings which he is made unto us. It is God that gives us faith whereby we close with Christ.

So that in this verse is shewn our dependance on each person in the Trinity for all our good. We are dependent on Christ the Son of God, as he is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We are dependent on the Father, who has given us Christ, and made him to be these

things to us. We are dependent on the Holy Ghost, for it is *of him that we are in Christ Jesus;* it is the Spirit of God that gives faith in him, whereby we receive him, and close with him.

DOCTRINE.

"God is glorified in the work of redemption in this, that there appears in it so absolute and universal a dependance of the redeemed on him."——Here I propose to shew, 1*st*, That there is an absolute and universal dependance of the redeemed on God for all their good. And, 2*dly*, That God hereby is exalted and glorified in the work of redemption.

I. There is an absolute and universal dependance of the redeemed on God. The nature and contrivance of our redemption is such, that the redeemed are in every thing directly, immediately, and entirely dependent on God: They are dependent on him for all, and are dependent on him every way.

The several ways wherein the dependance of one being may be upon another for its good, and wherein the redeemed of Jesus Christ depend on God for all their good, are these, viz. That they have all their good of him, and that they have all through him, and that they have all in him: That he is the *cause* and original whence all their good comes, therein it is *of* him; and that he is the *medium* by which it is obtained and conveyed, therein they have it *through* him; and that he is the *good itself* given and conveyed, therein it is *in* him. Now those that are redeemed by Jesus Christ do, in all these respects, very directly and entirely depend on God for their all.

First, The redeemed have all their good *of* God. God is the great *author* of it. He is the *first* cause of it; and not only so, but he is the *only* proper cause. It is of God that we have our Redeemer. It is God that has provided a Saviour for us. Jesus Christ is not only of God in his person, as he is the only begotten Son of God, but he is from God, as we are concerned in him, and in his office of Mediator. He is the gift of God to us: God chose and anointed him, appointed him his work, and sent him into the world. And as it is God that *gives*, so it is God that *accepts* the Saviour. He gives the purchaser, and he affords the thing purchased.

It is of God that Christ becomes ours, that we are brought to him, and are united to him. It is of God that we receive faith to close with him, that we may have an interest in him.

Eph. ii. 8. "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is of God that we actually receive all the benefits that Christ has purchased. It is God that pardons and justifies, and delivers from going down to hell; and into his favour the redeemed are received, when they are justified. So it is God that delivers from the dominion of sin, cleanses us from our filthiness, and changes us from our deformity. It is of God that the redeemed receive all their true excellency, wisdom, and holiness; and that two ways, viz. as the Holy Ghost by whom these things are immediately wrought is from God, proceeds from him, and is sent by him; and also as the Holy Ghost himself is God, by whose operation and indwelling the knowledge of God and divine things, a holy disposition and all grace, are conferred and upheld. And though means are made use of in conferring grace on men's souls, yet it is of God that we have these means of grace, and it is he that makes them effectual. It is of God that we have the holy Scriptures; they are his word. It is of God that we have ordinances, and their efficacy depends on the immediate influence of his Spirit. The ministers of the gospel are sent of God, and all their sufficiency is of him.—2 Cor. iv. 7. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Their success depends entirely and absolutely on the immediate blessing and influence of God.

1. The redeemed have all from the *grace* of God. It was of mere grace that God gave us his only begotten Son. The grace is great in proportion to the excellency of what is given. The gift was infinitely precious, because it was of a person infinitely worthy, a person of infinite glory; and also because it was of a person infinitely near and dear to God. The grace is great in proportion to the benefit we have given us in him. The benefit is doubly infinite, in that in him we have deliverance from an infinite, because an eternal misery, and do also receive eternal joy and glory. The grace in bestowing this gift is great in proportion to our unworthiness to whom it is given; instead of deserving such a gift, we merited infinitely ill of God's hands. The grace is great according to the manner of giving, or in proportion to the humiliation and expence of the method and means by which a way is made for our having the gift. He gave him to dwell amongst us; he gave him to us incarnate, or in our nature; and in the like though sinless infirmities. He gave him to us in a low and afflicted state; and

not only so, but as slain, that he might be a feast for our souls.

The grace of God in bestowing this gift is most free. It was what God was under no obligation to bestow. He might have rejected fallen man, as he did the fallen angels. It was what we never did any thing to merit; it was given while we were yet enemies, and before we had so much as repented. It was from the love of God who saw no excellency in us to attract it; and it was without expectation of ever being requited for it.—And it is from mere grace that the benefits of Christ are applied to such and such particular persons. Those that are called and sanctified are to attribute it alone to the good pleasure of God's goodness, by which they are distinguished. He is sovereign, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.

Man hath now a greater dependance on the grace of God than he had before the fall. He depends on free goodness of God for much more than he did then. Then he depended on God's goodness for conferring the reward of perfect obedience; for God was not obliged to promise and bestow that reward. But now we are dependent on the grace of God for much more; we stand in need of grace, not only to bestow glory upon us, but to deliver us from hell and eternal wrath. Under the first covenant we depended on God's goodness to give us the reward of righteousness; and so we do now: But we stand in need of God's free and sovereign grace to give us that righteousness; to pardon our sin, and release us from the guilt and infinite demerit of it.

And as we are dependent on the goodness of God for more now than under the first covenant, so we are dependent on a much greater, more free and wonderful goodness. We are now more dependent on God's arbitrary and sovereign good pleasure. We were in our first estate dependent on God for holiness. We had our original righteousness from him; but then holiness was not bestowed in such a way of sovereign good pleasure as it is now. Man was created holy, for it became God to create holy all his reasonable creatures. It would have been a disparagement to the holiness of God's nature, if he had made an intelligent creature unholy. But now when fallen man is made holy, it is from mere and arbitrary grace; God may for ever deny holiness to the fallen creature if he pleases, without any disparagement to any of his perfections.

And we are not only indeed more dependent on the grace

of God, but our dependance is much more conspicuous, because our own insufficiency and helplessness in ourselves is much more apparent in our fallen and undone state, than it was before we were either sinful or miserable. We are more apparently dependent on God for holiness, because we are first sinful, and utterly polluted, and afterward holy. So the production of the effect is sensible, and its derivation from God more obvious. If man was ever holy and always was so, it would not be so apparent, that he had not holiness necessarily, as an inseparable qualification of human nature. So we are more apparently dependent on free grace for the favour of God, for we are first justly the objects of his displeasure, and afterwards are received into favour. We are more apparently dependent on God for happiness, being first miserable, and afterwards happy. It is more apparently free and without merit in us, because we are actually without any kind of excellency to merit, if there could be any such thing as merit in creature-excellency. And we are not only without any true excellency, but are full of, and wholly defiled with, that which is infinitely odious. All our good is more apparently from God, because we are first naked and wholly without any good, and afterwards enriched with all good.

2. We receive all from the *power* of God. Man's redemption is often spoken of as a work of wonderful power as well as grace. The great power of God appears in bringing a sinner from his low state, from the depths of sin and misery, to such an exalted state of holiness and happiness. Eph. i. 19. "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."——

We are dependent on God's power through every step of our redemption. We are dependent on the power of God to convert us, and give faith in Jesus Christ, and the new nature. It is a work of creation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v 17. "We are created in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 10. The fallen creature cannot attain to true holiness, but by being created again, Eph. iv. 24. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is a raising from the dead. Colos. ii. 12, 13. "Wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Yea, it is a more glorious work of power than mere creation, or raising a dead body to life, in that the effect attained is greater and more excellent. That holy and happy

being, and spiritual life which is produced in the work of conversion, is a far greater and more glorious effect, than mere being and life. And the state from whence the change is made —a death in sin, a total corruption of nature, and depth of misery—is far more remote from the state attained, than mere death or non-entity.

It is by God's power also that we are preserved in a state of grace. 1 Pet. i. 5. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." As grace is at first from God, so it is continually from him, and is maintained by him, as much as light in the atmosphere is all day long from the sun, as well as at first dawning, or at sun-rising.—Men are dependent on the power of God for every exercise of grace, and for carrying on that work in the heart, for subduing sin and corruption, increasing holy principles, and enabling to bring forth fruit in good works. Man is dependent on divine power in bringing grace to its perfection, in making the soul completely amiable in Christ's glorious likeness, and filling of it with a satisfying joy and blessedness; and for the raising of the body to life, and to such a perfect state, that it shall be suitable for an habitation and organ for a soul so perfected and blessed. These are the most glorious effects of the power of God, that are seen in the series of God's acts with respect to the creatures.

Man was dependent on the power of God in his first estate, but he is more dependent on his power now; he needs God's power to do more things for him, and depends on a more wonderful exercise of his power. It was an effect of the power of God to make man holy at the first; but more remarkably so now, because there is a great deal of opposition and difficulty in the way. It is a more glorious effect of power to make that holy that was so depraved, and under the dominion of sin, than to confer holiness on that which before had nothing of the contrary. It is a more glorious work of power to rescue a soul out of the hands of the devil, and from the powers of darkness, and to bring it into a state of salvation, than to confer holiness where there was no prepossession or opposition. Luke xi. 21, 22. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." So it is a more glorious work of power to uphold a soul in a state of grace and holiness, and to carry it on till it is brought to glory, when there is so much sin remaining in the heart resisting, and

Satan with all his might opposing, than it would have been to have kept man from falling at first, when Satan had nothing in man.—Thus we have shewn how the redeemed are dependent on God for all their good, as they have all of him.

Secondly, They are also dependent on God for all, as they have all *through* him. God is the medium of it, as well as the author and fountain of it. All we have, wisdom, the pardon of sin, deliverance from hell, acceptance into God's favour, grace and holiness, true comfort and happiness, eternal life and glory, is from God by a Mediator; and this Mediator is God; which Mediator we have an absolute dependance upon, as he through whom we receive all. So that here is another way wherein we have our dependance on God for all good. God not only gives us the Mediator, and accepts his mediation, and of his power and grace bestows the things purchased by the Mediator; but he the Mediator is God.

Our blessings are what we have by purchase; and the purchase is made of God, the blessings are purchased of him, and God gives the purchaser; and not only so, but God is the purchaser. Yea God is both the purchaser and the price; for Christ, who is God, purchased these blessings for us, by offering up himself as the price of our salvation. He purchased eternal life by the sacrifice of himself. Heb. vii. 27. "He offered up himself." And ix. 26. "He hath appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Indeed it was the human nature that was offered; but it was the same person with the divine, and therefore was an infinite price.

As we thus have our good through God, we have a dependance on him in a respect that man in his first estate had not. Man was to have eternal life then through his own righteousness; so that he had partly a dependance upon what was in himself; for we have a dependance upon that through which we have our good, as well as that from which we have it: and though man's righteousness that he then depended on was indeed from God, yet it was his own, it was inherent in himself; so that his dependance was not so *immediately* on God. But now the righteousness that we are dependent on is not in ourselves, but in God. We are saved through the righteousness of Christ: He *is made unto us righteousness*; and therefore is prophesied of, Jer. xxiii. 6. under that name, "the Lord our righteousness." In that the righteousness we are justified by is the righteousness of Christ, it is the righteousness of God. 2 Cor. v. 21. "That we might be made the

righteousness of God in him."—Thus in redemption we have not only all things of God, but by and through him, 1. Cor. viii. 6. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Thirdly, The redeemed have all their good *in God.* We not only have it of him, and through him, but it consists in him; he is all our good.—The good of the redeemed is either objective or inherent. By their objective good, I mean that extrinsic object, in the possession and enjoyment of which they are happy. Their inherent good is that excellency or pleasure which is in the soul itself. With respect to both of which the redeemed have all their good in God, or which is the same thing, God himself is all their good.

1. The redeemed have all their *objective* good in God. God himself is the great good which they are brought to the possession and enjoyment of by redemption. He is the highest good, and the sum of all that good which Christ purchased. God is the inheritance of the saints; he is the portion of their souls. God is their wealth and treasure, their food, their life, their dwelling-place, their ornament and diadem, and their everlasting honour and glory. They have none in heaven but God; he is the great good which the redeemed are received to at death, and which they are to rise to at the end of the world. The Lord God is the light of the heavenly Jerusalem; and is the "river of the water of life" that runs, and "the tree of life that grows, in the midst of the paradise of God." The glorious excellencies and beauty of God will be what will for ever entertain the minds of the saints, and the love of God will be their everlasting feast. The redeemed will indeed enjoy other things; they will enjoy the angels, and will enjoy one another: but that which they shall enjoy in the angels, or each other, or in any thing else whatsoever that will yield them delight and happiness, will be what shall be seen of God in them.

2. The redeemed have all their *inherent* good in God. Inherent good is twofold; it is either excellency or pleasure. These the redeemed not only derive from God, as caused by him, but have them in him. They have spiritual excellency and joy by a kind of participation of God. They are made excellent by a communication of God's excellency. God puts his own beauty, i. e. his beautiful likeness, upon their souls. They are made partakers of the divine nature, or moral

image of God, 2 Pet. i. 4. They are holy by being made partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. The saints are beautiful and blessed by a communication of God's holiness and joy, as the moon and planets are bright by the sun's light The saint hath spiritual joy and pleasure by a kind of effusion of God on the soul. In these things the redeemed have communion with God; that is, they partake with him and of him.

The saints have both their spiritual excellency and blessedness by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and his dwelling in them. They are not only caused by the Holy Ghost, but are in him as their principle. The Holy Spirit becoming an inhabitant, is a vital principle in the soul. He, acting in, upon, and with the soul, becomes a fountain of true holiness and joy, as a spring is of water, by the exertion and diffusion of itself. John iv. 14. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Compared with chap. vii. 38, 39. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; but this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The sum of what Christ has purchased for us, is that spring of water spoken of in the former of those places, and those rivers of living water spoken of in the latter. And the sum of the blessings, which the redeemed shall receive in heaven, is that river of water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1. Which doubtless signifies the same with those rivers of living water, explained, John vii 38, 39. which is elsewhere called the "river of God's pleasures." Herein consists the fulness of good, which the saints receive of Christ. It is by partaking of the Holy Spirit, that they have communion with Christ in his fulness. God hath given the Spirit, not by measure unto him; and they do receive of his fulness, and grace for grace. This is the sum of the saints inheritance; and therefore that little of the Holy Ghost which believers have in this world, is said to be the earnest of their inheritance, 2 Cor. i. 22. "Who hath also sealed us, and given us the Spirit in our hearts." And chap. v. 5. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." And Eph. i. 13, 14. "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."

The Holy Spirit and good things are spoken of in Scripture as the same; as if the Spirit of God communicated to the soul, comprised all good things, Matt. vii. 11. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?" In Luke it is, chap. xi. 13. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" This is the sum of the blessings that Christ died to procure, and the subject of gospel-promises. Gal. iii. 13, 14. "He was made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The Spirit of God is the great promise of the Father, Luke xxiv. 49. "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you." The Spirit of God therefore is called "the Spirit of promise;" Eph. i. 33. This promised thing Christ received, and had given into his hand, as soon as he had finished the work of our redemption, to bestow on all that he had redeemed; Acts, ii. 13. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye both see and hear." So that all the holiness and happiness of the redeemed is in God. It is in the communications, indwelling, and acting of the Spirit of God. Holiness and happiness is in the fruit, here and hereafter, because God dwells in them, and they in God.

Thus God has given us us the Redeemer, and it is by him that our good is purchased. So God is the Redeemer and the price; and he also is the good purchased. So that all that we have is of God, and through him, and in him, Rom. xi. 36. "For of him, and through him, and to him, or in him, are all things." The same in the Greek that is here rendered *to him*, is rendered *in him*, 1 Cor. viii. 6.

II. God is glorified in the work of redemption by this means, viz. By there being so great and universal a dependance of the redeemed on him.

1. Man hath so much the greater occasion and obligation to notice and acknowledge God's perfections and all-sufficiency. The greater the creature's dependance is on God's perfections, and the greater concern he has with them, so much the greater occasion has he to take notice of them. So much the greater concern any one has with and dependance upon the power and grace of God, so much the greater occasion has he to take notice of that power and grace. So much the greater and more immediate dependance there is on the divine holiness, so much the greater occasion to take notice of and acknow-

ledge that. So much the greater and more absolute dependance we have on the divine perfections, as belonging to the several persons of the Trinity, so much the greater occasion have we to observe and own the divine glory of each of them. That which we are most concerned with, is surely most in the way of our observation and notice; and this kind of concern with any thing, viz. dependance, does especially tend to command and oblige the attention and observation. Those things that we are not much dependent upon, it is easy to neglect; but we can scarce do any other than mind that which we have a great dependance on. By reason of our so great dependance on God, and his perfections, and in so many respects, he and his glory are the more directly set in our view, which way soever we turn our eyes.

We have the greater occasion to take notice of God's all-sufficiency, when all our sufficiency is thus every way of him. We have the more occasion to contemplate him as an infinite good, and as the fountain of all good. Such a dependance on God demonstrates his all-sufficiency. So much as the dependance of the creature is on God, so much the greater does the creature's emptiness in himself appear; and so much the greater the creature's emptiness, so much the greater must the fulnes of the Being be who supplies him. Our having all *of* God, shews the fulness of his power and grace; our having all *through* him, shews the fulness of his merit and worthiness; and our having all in him demonstrates his fulness of beauty, love, and happiness. And the redeemed, by reason of the greatness of their dependance on God, have not only so much the greater occasion, but obligation to contemplate and acknowledge the glory and fulness of God. How unreasonable and ungrateful should we be if we did not acknowledge that sufficiency and glory which we absolutely, immediately, and universally depend upon?

2. Hereby is demonstrated how great God's glory is considered comparatively, or as compared with the creature's.—By the creature being thus wholly and universally dependent on God, it appears that the creature is nothing, and that God is all. Hereby it appears that God is infinitely above us; that God's strength, and wisdom, and holiness, are infinitely greater than ours. However great and glorious the creature apprehends God to be, yet if he be not sensible of the difference between God and him, so as to see that God's glory is great, compared with his own, he will not be disposed to give God the glory due to his name. If the creature in any respects

sets himself upon a level with God, or exalts himself to any competition with him, however he may apprehend that great honour and profound respect may belong to God from those that are at a greater distance, he will not be so sensible of its being due from him. So much the more men exalt themselves, so much the less will they surely be disposed to exalt God. It is certainly what God aims at in the disposition of things in redemption, (if we allow the Scriptures to be a revelation of God's mind), that God should appear full, and man in himself empty, that God should appear all, and man nothing. It is God's declared design that others should not "glory in his presence;" which implies that it is his design to advance his own comparative glory. So much the more man "glories in God's presence," so much the less glory is ascribed to God.

3. By its being thus ordered, that the creature should have so absolute and universal a dependance on God, provision is made that God should have our whole souls, and should be the object of our undivided respect. If we had our dependance partly on God, and partly on something else, man's respect would be divided to those different things on which he had dependance. Thus it would be if we depended on God only for a part of our good, and on ourselves, or some other being, for another part: Or if we had our good only from God, and through another that was not God, and in something else distinct from both, our hearts would be divided between the good itself, and him from whom, and him through whom we received it. But now there is no occasion for this, God being not only he from or of whom we have all good, but also through whom, and is that good itself, that we have from him and through him. So that whatsoever there is to attract our respect, the tendency is still directly towards God, all unites in him as the centre.

USE.

1. We may here observe the marvellous wisdom of God, in the work of redemption. God hath made man's emptiness and misery, his low, lost, and ruined state, into which he sunk by the fall, an occasion of the greater advancement of his own glory, as in other ways, so particularly in this, that there is now much more universal and apparent dependance of man on God. Though God be pleased to lift man out of that dismal abyss of sin and woe into which he was fallen, and exceedingly to exalt him in excellency and honour, and to an high

pitch of glory and blessedness, yet the creature hath nothing in any respect to glory of; all the glory evidently belongs to God, all is in a mere, and most absolute, and divine dependance on the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And each person of the Trinity is equally glorified in this work: There is an absolute dependance of the creature on every one for all: All is of the Father, all through the Son, and all in the Holy Ghost. Thus God appears in the work of redemption as all in all. It is fit that he who is, and there is none else, should be the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the all and the only, in this work.

2. Hence those doctrines and schemes of divinity that are in any respect opposite to such an absolute and universal dependance on God, derogate from his glory, and thwart the design of our redemption. And such are those schemes that put the creature in God's stead, in any of the mentioned respects, that exalt man into the place of either Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, in any thing pertaining to our redemption. However they may allow of a dependance of the redeemed on God, yet they deny a dependance that is so *absolute* and universal. They own an entire dependance on God for *some* things, but not for others; they own that we depend on God for the gift and acceptance of a Redeemer, but deny so absolute a dependance on him for the obtaining of an *interest* in the Redeemer. They own an absolute dependance on the Father for giving his Son, and on the Son for working out redemption, but not so entire a dependance on the Holy Ghost for *conversion*, and a being in Christ, and so coming to a title to his benefits. They own a dependance on God for *means* of grace, but not absolutely for the benefit and success of those means; a partial dependance on the power of God, for obtaining and exercising holiness, but not a mere dependance on the arbitrary and sovereign grace of God. They own a dependance on the free grace of God for a reception into his favour, so far that it is without any proper merit, but not as it is without being attracted, or moved with any excellency. They own a partial dependance on Christ, as he through whom we have life, as having purchased new terms of life, but still hold that the righteousness through which we have life is inherent in ourselves, as it was under the first covenant. Now whatever scheme is inconsistent with our *entire* dependance on God for all, and of having all of him, through him, and in him, it is repugnant to the design and tenor of the gospel, and robs it of that which God accounts its lustre and glory.

3. Hence we may learn a reason why faith is that by which we come to have an interest in this redemption; for there is included in the nature of faith, a sensible acknowledgment of *absolute dependance* on God in this affair. It is very fit that it should be required of all, in order to their having the benefit of this redemption, that they should be sensible of, and acknowledge their dependance on God for it It is by this means that God hath contrived to glorify himself in redemption; and it is fit that he should at least have this glory of those that are the subjects of this redemption, and have the benefit of it — Faith is a sensibleness of what is real in the work of redemption; and the soul that believes doth entirely depend on God for all salvation, in its own sense and act. Faith abases men, and exalts God; it gives all the glory of redemption to him alone. It is necessary in order to saving faith, that man should be emptied of himself, be sensible that he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Humility is a great ingredient of true faith: He that truly receives redemption, receives it as a little child, Mark x. 15. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein. It is the delight of a believing soul to abase itself and exalt God alone: that is the language of it, Psalm, cxv. 1. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory."

4. Let us be exhorted to exalt God alone, and ascribe to him all the glory of redemption. Let us endeavour to obtain, and increase in, a sensibleness of our great dependance on God, to have our eye to him alone, to mortify a self-dependant, and self-righteous disposition. Man is naturally exceeding prone to exalt himself, and depend on his own power or goodness; as though from himself he must expect happiness. He is prone to have respect to enjoyments aliene from God and his Spirit, as those in which happiness is to be found.—But this doctrine should teach us to exalt God *alone;* as by trust and reliance, so by praise. *Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.* Hath any man hope that he is converted, and sanctified, and that his mind is endowed with true excellency and spiritual beauty? that his sins are forgiven, and he received into God's favour, and exalted to the honour and blessedness of being his child, and an heir of eternal life? let him give God all the glory; who alone makes him to differ from the worst of men in this world, or the most miserable of the damned in hell. Hath any man much comfort and strong hope of eternal life, let not his hope lift him up, but dispose him the more to

abase himself, to reflect on his own exceeding unworthiness of such a favour, and to exalt God alone. Is any man eminent in holiness, and abundant in good works, let him take nothing of the glory of it to himself, but ascribe it to him whose "workmanship we are, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

SERMON II.*

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD.

DEUT. XXXII. 35.

——Their foot shall slide in due time.——

IN this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God's visible people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who, notwithstanding all God's wonderful works towards them, remained, (as ver. 28.) void of counsel, having no understanding in them. Under all the cultivations of Heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as in the two verses next preceding the text.—The expression I have chosen for my text, *Their foot shall slide in due time*, seems to imply the following things, relating to the punishment and destruction to which these wicked Israelites were exposed.

1. That they were always exposed to *destruction*; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding. The same is expressed, Psalm lxxiii. 18. "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction."

2. It implies, that they were always exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall,

* Preached at Enfield, July 8, 1741. at a time of great awakenings; and attended with remarkable impressions on many of the hearers.

he falls at once without warning: Which is also expressed in Psalm lxxiii. 18, 19. "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction: How are they brought into desolation as in a moment?"

3. Another thing implied is, that they are liable to fall *of themselves*, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

4. That the reason why they are not fallen already, and do not fall now, is only that God's appointed time is not come. For it is said, that when that due time, or appointed time, comes, *their foot shall slide*. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined by their own weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that stands in such slippery declining ground, on the edge of a pit, he cannot stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this.—"There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God,"—By the *mere* pleasure of God, I mean his *sovereign* pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.—The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations.

1. There is no want of *power* in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Mens hands cannot be strong when God rises up: The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands.—He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defence from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps of light chaff before the wirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is

easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by: thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They *deserve* to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destry them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "Cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground?" Luke xiii. 7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of *condemnation* to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already." So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is. John viii. 23. "Ye are from beneath:" And thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law, assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same *anger* and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them; as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, and there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth; yea, doubtless, with many that are now in this congregation, who it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell.—So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such an one as themselves, though they may imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnance is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow

The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. The *devil* stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods, Luke xi. 12. The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish *principles* reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceeding violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruptions, the same enmity does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled sea, Isaiah lvii. 20. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;" but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security

to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger in any respect in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world in all ages, shews this is no evidence, that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear, that God had need to be at the expence of a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of the world, are so in God's hands, and so universally and absolutely subject to his power and determination, that it does not depend at all the less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural mens' prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. To this, divine providence and universal experience does also bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that mens' own wisdom is no security to them from death; that if it were otherwise we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world, and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death; but how is it in fact? Eceles. ii. 16. "How dieth the wise man? even as the fool"

9. All wicked mens' pains and *contrivance* which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. Every one lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his

schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he lays out matters better for his own escape than others have done. He does not intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive: it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could speak with them, and enquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about hell, ever to be the subjects of that misery, we, doubtless, should hear one and another reply, "No, I never intended to come here: I had laid out matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself: I thought my scheme good. I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpected; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief: Death outwitted me: God's wrath was too quick for me. O my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10 God has laid himself under *no obligation*, by any promise, to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural mens earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

APPLICATION.

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ.—That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it; but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf,

and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with, and do not willingly subserve to any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been with-held; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand

times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: Now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet, it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his

pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: It is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.—And consider here more particularly,

1. *Whose* wrath it is: It is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. xx. 2. "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: Whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul." The subject that very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentate in their greatest majesty and strength, and when cloathed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth. It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: Both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. Luke xii. 4, 5. "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

2. It is the *fierceness* of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isaiah, lix. 18. "Ac-

cording to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to his adversaries." So Isaiah, lxvi. 15. "For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." And in many other places. So, Rev. xix. 15. we read of "the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." The words are exceeding terrible. If it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: But it is "the fierceness and wrath of God." The fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! Oh how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them! But it is also "the fierceness and wrath of *Almighty* God." As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict, as though omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. Oh! then, what will be the consequence! What will become of the poor worm that shall suffer it! Whose hands can be strong? And whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall *not suffer beyond what strict justice requires.* Nothing shall be with-held, because it is so hard for you to bear. Ezek. viii. 18. "Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them." Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any

regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only "laugh and mock," Prov. i. 25, 26. &c.

How awful are those words, Isaiah lxiii. 3. which are the words of the great God, "I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, viz. contempt, and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or shewing you the least regard or favour, that instead of that, he will only tread you under foot. And though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict to that end, that he might shew what that wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on his heart to shew to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to shew how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that would provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to shew his wrath when enraged with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; and accordingly gave order that the burning fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it. But the great God is also willing to shew his wrath, and magnify his awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of his enemies. Rom. ix. 22. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much

long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, even to shew how terrible the unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold that awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. Isaiah xxxiii. 12—14. "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites," &c.

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness of the omnipotent God shall be magnified upon you, in the ineffable strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. Isaiah lxvi. 23, 24. "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh".

4. It is *everlasting* wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this

almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: For "who knows the power of God's anger?"

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in hell? And it would be a wonder, if some that are now present should not be in hell in a very short time, even before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some persons, that now sit here, in some seats of this meeting-house, in health, quiet and secure, should be there before to-morrow morning. Those of you that finally continue in a natural condition, that shall keep out of hell longest, will be there in a little time! your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly, upon many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you. Their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but

here you are in the land of the living, and in the house of God, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling, and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north, and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of the people at Suffield *, where they are flocking from day to day to Christ?

Are there not many here who have lived long in the world, and are not to this day born again? and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? Oh, Sirs, your case, in an especial manner, is extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart is extremely great. Do you not see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the present remarkable and wonderful dispensation of God's mercy? You had need to consider yourselves, and awake thoroughly out of sleep. You cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God.—And you, young men, and young women, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an extraordinary opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness.—And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and

* A town in the neighbourhood.

every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many other children in the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings.

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of such great favour to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls; and never was there so great danger of such persons being given up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. God seems now to be hastily gathering in his elect in all parts of the land; and probably the greater part of adult persons that ever shall be saved, will be brought in now in a little time, and that it will be as it was on the great out-pouring of the Spirit upon the Jews in the apostles' days, the election will obtain, and the rest will be blinded. If this should be the case with you, you will eternally curse this day, and will curse the day that ever you was born, to see such a season of the pouring-out of God's Spirit, and will wish that you had died and gone to hell before you had seen it. Now undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is in an extraordinary manner laid at the root of the trees, that every tree which brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation: Let every one fly out of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."

SEVEN SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

VIZ.

THE BEST PORTION.
DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.
PARDON FOR SINNERS.
THE PRAYER-HEARING GOD.
EXCOMMUNICATION.
WRATH TO THE UTTERMOST.
WICKED MEN USEFUL IN THEIR DESTRUCTION ONLY.

CONTINUATION OF VOL. VI.

SERMON I*.

GOD THE BEST PORTION OF THE CHRISTIAN.

PSALM LXXIII. 25.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

IN this psalm, the Psalmist (Asaph,) relates the great difficulty which existed in his own mind, from the consideration of the wicked. He observes ver. 2 and 3. "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipt. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." In the 4th and following verses, he informs us, what in the wicked was his temptation. In the first place, he observed, that they were *prosperous*, and all things went well with them. He then observed their *behaviour* in their prosperity, and the use which they made of it; and that God, notwithstanding such abuse, *continued* their prosperity. Then he tells us by what means he was helped out of this difficulty, viz. by going into the *sanctuary*, ver. 16, 17.; and proceeds to informs us what considerations they were which helped him, viz.—(1.) The consideration of the *miserable end* of wicked men. However they prosper for the present, yet they come to a woeful end at last, vers. 18—20.—(2.) The consideration of the *blessed end* of the saints. Although the saints, while they live, may be afflicted, yet they came to a happy end at last, vers. 21—24. —(3.) The consideration, that the godly have a much *better portion* than the wicked, even though they have no other portion but God; as in the text and following verse. Though the wicked are in prosperity, and are not in trouble as other men; yet the godly though in affliction, are in a state infinitely better, because they have God for their portion. They

* Dated April 1736.

need desire nothing else; he that hath God, hath all. Thus the psalmist professes the sense and apprehension which he had of things: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

In the verse immediately preceding, the Psalmist takes notice how the saints are happy in God, both when they are in this world, and also when they are taken to another. They are blessed in God in this world, in that he *guides them by his counsel*; and when he takes them out of it, they are still happy, in that then he *receives them to glory*. This probably led him, in the text, to declare that he desired *no other portion*, either in this world or in that to come, either in heaven or upon earth.—Whence we learn, *That it is the spirit of a truly godly man, to prefer God before all other things, either in heaven or on earth.*

I. A godly man prefers God before any thing else *in heaven.*

1. He prefers God before any thing else that *actually is* in heaven. Every godly man hath his heart in heaven; his affections are mainly set on what is to be had there. Heaven is his chosen country and inheritance. He hath respect to heaven, as a traveller, who is in a distant land, hath to his own country. The traveller can content himself to be in a strange land for a while, but his own native land is preferred by him to all others: Heb. xi. 13, &c. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."—The respect which a godly person hath to heaven may be compared to the respect which a child, when he is abroad, hath to his father's house. He can be contented abroad for a little while; but the place to which he desires to return, and in which to dwell, is his own home. Heaven is the true saint's Father's house: John xiv. 2. "In my Father's house are many mansions." John xx. 17. "I ascend to my Father and your Father."

Now, the main reason why the godly man hath his heart thus to heaven, is because God is there; that is the palace of the Most High. It is the place where God is gloriously

present, where his love is gloriously manifested, where the godly may be with him, see him as he is, and love, serve, praise, and enjoy him perfectly. If God and Christ were not in heaven, he would not be so earnest in seeking it, nor would he take so much pains in a laborious travel through this wilderness, nor would the consideration that he is going to heaven when he dies, be such a comfort to him under toils and afflictions. The martyrs would not undergo cruel sufferings, from their persecutors, with a chearful prospect of going to heaven, did they not expect to be with Christ, and to enjoy God there. They would not with that chearfulness forsake all their earthly possessions, and all their earthly friends, as many thousands of them have done, and wander about in poverty and banishment, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, in hopes of exchanging their earthly for an heavenly inheritance, were it not that they hope to be with their glorious Redeemer and heavenly Father.—The believer's heart is in heaven, because his treasure is there.

2. A godly man prefers God before any thing else that *might be* in heaven. Not only is there nothing *actually* in heaven, which is in his esteem equal with God; but neither is there any thing of which he can conceive as *possible to be there*, which by him is esteemed and desired equally with God. Some quite different enjoyments to be in heaven, from those which the scriptures teach us. The Mahometans, for instance, suppose that in heaven are to be enjoyed all manner of sensual delights and pleasures. Many things which Mahomet has feigned are to the lusts and carnal appetites of men the most agreeable that he could devise, and with them he flattered his followers.—But the true saint, could not contrive one more agreeable to his inclination and desires, than such as is revealed in the word of God; a heaven of enjoying the glorious God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. There he shall have all sin taken away, and shall be perfectly conformed to God, and shall spend an eternity in exalted exercises of love to him, and in the enjoyment of his love. If God were not to be enjoyed in heaven, but only vast wealth, immense treasures of silver, and gold, great honour of such kind as men obtain in this world, and a fulness of the greatest sensual delights and pleasures; all these things would not make up for the want of God and Christ, and the enjoyment of them there. If it were empty of God, it would indeed be an empty melancholy place.—The godly have been made sensible, as to all creature-enjoyments, that they cannot satisfy the soul; and

therefore nothing will content them but God. Offer a saint what you will, if you deny him God, he will esteem himself miserable. God is the centre of his desires; and as long as you keep his soul from its proper centre, it will not be at rest.

II. It is the temper of a godly man to prefer God before all other things *on the earth.*

1. The saint prefers that enjoyment of God, for which he *hopes* hereafter, to any thing in this world. He looketh not so much at the things which are seen, and temporal, as at those which are unseen and eternal, 1 Cor. iv. 18. It is but a little of God that the saint enjoys in this world; he hath but a little acquaintance with God, and enjoys but a little of the manifestations of the divine glory and love. But God hath promised to give him himself hereafter in a full enjoyment. And these promises are more precious to the saint, than the most precious earthly jewels. The gospel contains greater treasures, in his esteem, than the cabinets of princes, or the mines of the Indies.

2. The saints prefer what of God may be *obtained* in this life before all things in the world. There is a great difference in the present spiritual attainments of the saints. Some attain to much greater acquaintance and communion with God, and conformity to him, than others. But the highest attainments are very small in comparison with what is future. The saints are capable of making progress in spiritual attainments, and they earnestly desire such further attainments. Not contented with those degrees to which they have already attained, they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. It is their desire, to know more of God, to have more of his image, and to be enabled more to imitate God and Christ in their walk and conversation. Psal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Psal. xlii. 1, 2. "As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Psal. lxiii. 1, 2. "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." See also, Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 3. and Psal. cxxx. "My

soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

Though every saint has not this longing desire after God to the same degree that the Psalmist had, yet they are all of the same spirit; they earnestly desire to have more of his presence in their hearts. That this is the temper of the godly in general, and not of some particular saints only, appears from Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. where not any particular saint, but the church in general speaks thus: "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." See also Cant. iii. 1, 2. v. 6, 8.

The saints are not always in the lively exercise of grace: but such a spirit they have, and sometimes they have the sensible exercise of it. They desire God and divine attainments, more than all earthly things; and seek to be rich in grace, more than they do to get earthly riches. They desire the honour which is of God, more than that which is of men, John v. 44. and communion with him, more than any earthly pleasures. They are of the same spirit which the apostle expresses, Phil. iii. 8. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."

3. The saint prefers *what he hath already of God* before any thing in this world. That which was infused into his heart at his conversion, is more precious to him than any thing which the world can afford. The views which are sometimes given him of the beauty and excellency of God, are more precious to him than all the treasures of the wicked. The relation of a child in which he stands to God, the union which there is between his soul and Jesus Christ, he values more than the greatest earthly dignity. That image of God which is instamped on his soul, he values more than any earthly ornaments. It is, in his esteem, better to be adorned with the graces of God's Holy Spirit, than to be made to shine in jewels of gold, and the most costly pearls, or to be admired for the greatest external beauty. He values the robe of Christ's righteousness, which he hath on his soul, more than the robes of princes. The spiritual pleasures and delights which he sometimes has in God, he prefers far before all the pleasures of sin. Psal. lxxxiv. 10. "A day in thy courts is

better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

A saint thus prefers God before all other things in this world—1. As he prefers God before any thing else that he *possesses* in the world. Whatever temporal enjoyments he has, he prefers God to them all. Psal. xvi. 5, 6. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." If he be rich, he chiefly sets his heart on his heavenly riches. He prefers God before any earthly friend, and the divine favour before any respect shown him by his fellow-creatures. Although inadvertently these have room in his heart, and too much room; yet he reserves the throne of God; Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

2. He prefers God before any earthly enjoyment of which he *hath a prospect.* The children of men commonly set their hearts more on some earthly happiness for which they *hope*, and after which they are seeking, than on what they *have* in present possession. But a godly man prefers God to any thing which he has in prospect in this world. He may, indeed, through the prevalence of corruption, be for a season carried away with some enjoyment; however, he will again come to himself; this is not the temper of the man; he is of another spirit.

3. It is the spirit of a godly man to prefer God to any earthly enjoyments of which he *can conceive.* He not only prefers him to any thing which he now possesses; but he sees nothing possessed by any of his fellow-creatures, so estimable. Could he have as much worldly prosperity as he would, could he have earthly things just to his mind, and agreeable to his inclination; he values the portion which he has in God, incomparably more. He prefers Christ to earthly kingdoms.

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn, that whatever changes a godly man passes through, he is happy; because God, who is unchangeable, is his chosen portion. Though he meet with temporal losses, and be deprived of many, yea of all his temporal enjoyments: yet God whom he prefers before all, still remains, and cannot be lost. While he stays in this changeable, troublesome world, he is happy; because his chosen portion, on which he builds as his main foundation

for happiness, is above the world, and above all changes. And when he goes into another world, still he is happy, because that portion yet remains. Whatever he be deprived of, he cannot be deprived of his chief portion; his inheritance remains sure to him.—Could worldly minded men find out a way to secure to themselves those earthly enjoyments on which they mainly set their hearts, so that they could not be lost nor impaired while they live, how great would they account the privilege, though other things which they esteem in a less degree, were liable to the same uncertainty as they now are? Whereas now, those earthly enjoyments, on which men chiefly set their hearts, are often most fading. But how great is the happiness of those who have chosen the Fountain of all good, who prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth, and who can never be deprived of him to all eternity!

2. Let all by these things examine and try themselves, whether they be saints or not. As this which hath been exhibited is the spirit of the saints, so it is peculiar to them: none can use the language of the text, and say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, but the saints. A man's choice is that which determines his state. He that chuses God for his portion, and prefers him to all other things, is a godly man, for *he* chuses and worships him as God. To respect him as God, is to respect him above all other things; and if any man respect him as *his* God, *his God he is*, there is an union and covenant relation between that man and the true God.—Every man is as his God is. If you would know what a man is, whether he be a godly man or not, you must inquire what his God is? If the true God be he to whom he hath a supreme respect, whom he regards above all; he is doubtless a servant of the true God. But if the man have something else to which he pays a greater respect than to Jehovah, he is not a godly man.

Inquire, therefore, how it is with you, whether you prefer God before all other things. It may sometimes be a difficulty for persons to determine this to their satisfaction; the ungodly may be deluded with false affections; the godly in dull frames may be at a loss about it. Therefore you may try yourselves, as to this matter, several ways; if you cannot speak fully to one thing, yet you may perhaps to others.

1. What is it which *chiefly* makes you desire to go to heaven when you die? Indeed some have no great desire to go to

heaven. They do not care to go to hell; but if they could be safe from that, they would not much concern themselves about heaven. If it be not so with you, but you find that you have a desire after heaven, then inquire what it is for. Is the main reason, that you may be with God, have communion with him and be conformed to him? that you may see God, and enjoy him there? Is this the consideration which keeps your hearts and your desires, and your expectations towards heaven?

2. If you could avoid death, and might have your free choice, would you chuse to live *always* in this world without God, rather than in his time to leave the world, in order to be with him? If you might live here in earthly prosperity to all eternity, but destitute of the presence of God and communion with him—having no spiritual intercourse between him and your souls, God and you being strangers to each other for ever—would you chuse this rather than to leave the world, in order to dwell in heaven, as the children of God, there to enjoy the glorious privileges of children, in an holy and perfect love to God, and enjoyment of him to all eternity?

3. Do you prefer Christ to all others as the *way* to heaven? He who truly chuses God, prefers him in each person of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: the Father, as his Father; the Son, as his Saviour; the Holy Ghost, as his Sanctifier. Inquire, therefore, not only whether you chuse the enjoyment of God in heaven as your highest portion and happiness, but also whether you chuse Jesus Christ before all others, as your way to heaven; and that in a sense of the excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as being that which is to the glory of Christ, and of sovereign grace. Is the way of free grace, by the blood and righteousness of the blessed and glorious Redeemer, the most excellent way to life in your esteem? Doth it add a value to the heavenly inheritance, that it is conferred in this way? Is this far better to you than to be saved by your own righteousness, by any of your own performances, or by any other mediator?

4. If you might go to heaven in what course you please, would you prefer to all others the way of a *strict walk* with God? They who prefer God as hath been represented, chuse him, not only in the end, but in the way. They had rather be with God than with any other, not only when they come to the end of their journey; but also while they are in their pilgrimage. They chuse the way of walking with God though it be a way of labour, and care, and self-denial,

rather than a way of sin, though it be a way of sloth, and of gratifying their lusts.

5. Were you to spend your eternity in this world, would you chuse rather to live in mean and low circumstances with the gracious presence of God, than to live for ever in earthly prosperity without him. Would you rather spend it in holy living, and serving and walking with God, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of his children? God often manifesting himself to you as your Father, discovering to you his glory, and manifesting his love, lifting the light of his countenance upon you! Would you rather chuse these things, though in poverty, than to abound in worldly things, and to live in ease and prosperity, at the same time being an alien from the commonwealth of Israel? Could you be content to stand in no child-like relation to God, enjoying no gracious intercourse with him, having no right to be acknowledged by him as his children? Or would such a life as this, though in ever so great earthly prosperity, be esteemed by you a miserable life?

If, after all, there remain with you doubts, and a difficulty to determine concerning yourselves whether you do truly and sincerely prefer God to all other things, I would mention two things which are the surest ways to be determined in this matter, and which seem to be the best grounds of satisfaction in it.

1. The feeling of some particular, strong and lively *exercise* of such a spirit. A person may have such a spirit as is spoken of in the doctrine, and may have the exercise of it in a low degree, and yet remain in doubt whether he have it or not, and be unable to come to a satisfying determination. But God is pleased sometimes to give such discoveries of his glory and of the excellency of Christ, as do so draw forth the heart, that they know beyond all doubt, that they feel such a spirit as Paul spake of, when he said, "He counted all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord;" and they can boldly say, as in the text, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." At such times the people of God do not need any help of ministers to satisfy them whether they have the true love of God; they plainly see and feel it; and the Spirit of God then witnesseth with their spirits, that they are the children of God.—Therefore, if you would be satisfied upon this point, earnestly seek such attainments; seek that you may have such clear

and lively exercises of this spirit. To this end, you must labour to grow in grace. Though you have had such experiences in times past, and they satisfied you then, yet you may again doubt. You should therefore seek that you may have them more frequently; and the way to that is, earnestly to press forward, that you may have more acquaintance with God, and have the principles of grace strengthened. This is the way to have the exercises of grace stronger, more lively, and more frequent, and so to be satisfied that you have a spirit of supreme love to God.

2. The other way is, To inquire whether you prefer God to all other things in *practice*, i. e. when you have occasion to manifest by your practice which you prefer—when you must either cleave to one or the other, and must either forsake other things, or forsake God—whether then it be your manner practically to prefer God to all other things whatever, even to those earthly things to which your hearts are most wedded. Are your lives those of adherence to God, and of serving him in this manner?

He who sincerely prefers God to all other things in his heart, will do it in his practice. For when God and all other things come to stand in competition, that is the proper trial what a man chuses; and the manner of acting in such cases must certainly determine what the choice is in all free agents, or those who act on choice. Therefore there is no sign of sincerity so much insisted on in the Bible as this, that we deny ourselves, sell all, forsake the world, take up the cross, and follow Christ whithersoever he goeth.—Therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as those that beat the air; but keep under your bodies, and bring them into subjection. Act not as though you counted yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." 2 Pet. i. 5, &c. "And besides this, giving diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON II*.

THE SOLE CONSIDERATION, THAT GOD IS GOD,

SUFFICIENT TO STILL

ALL OBJECTIONS TO HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

PSALM XLVI. 10.

Be still, and know that I am God.

THIS psalm seems to be a song of the church in a time of great revolutions and desolations in the world. Therefore the church glories in God as her refuge, and strength, and present help, even in times of the greatest troubles and overturnings, ver. 1, 2, 3. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." The church makes her boast of God, not only as being her help, by defending her from the desolations and calamities in which the rest of the world were involved, but also by supplying her, as a never-failing river, with the refreshment, comfort, and joy, in the times of public calamities. See ver. 4, 5. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."

In the 6th and 8th verses are set forth the terrible changes and calamities which were in the world: "The Heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. Come, behold the works of God, what desola-

* Dated June 1735.

tion he hath made in the earth." In the verse preceding the text is elegantly set forth the manner in which God delivers the church from these calamities, and especially from the desolations of war, and the rage of their enemies: "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire;" i. e. he maketh wars to cease when they are against his people; he breaketh the bow when bent against his saints.

Then follow the words of the text: "Be still, and know that I am God." The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and and so commands all *to be still, and know that he is God.* For, says he, "I will be exalted among the Heathen; I will be exalted in the earth."

In the words may be observed,

1. A duty described, to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to *words;* not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of Providence, or complaining of them; not darkening counsel by words without knowledge, or justifying ourselves, and speaking great swelling words of vanity. We must be still as to *actions* and outward behaviour, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as to *the inward frame of our hearts*, cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it be.

2. We may observe the ground of this duty, viz. *the divinity of God.* His being God is a sufficient reason why we should be still before him, in no wise murmuring, or objecting, or opposing, but calmly and humbly submitting to him

3. How we must fulfil this duty, of being still before God, viz. with a sense of his divinity, as seeing the ground of this duty, in that we know him to be God. Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission.—Hence, the bare consideration *that God is God,* may well be sufficient to still all objections and opposition against the divine sovereign dispensations.

This may appear by the following things.

1. In that he is God, he is an absolutely and infinitely *perfect* being; and it is impossible that he should do amiss. As he is eternal, and receives not his existence from any other, he cannot be limited in his being, or any attribute, to any certain determinate quantity. If any thing have bounds fixed to it, there must be some cause or reason why those bounds are fixed just where they are. Whence it will follow, that every limited thing must have some cause; and therefore that being which has no cause must be unlimited.

It is most evident by the works of God, that his understanding and power are infinite; for that he hath made all things out of nothing, and upholds, and governs, and manages all things every moment, in all ages, without growing weary, must be of infinite power. He must also be of infinite knowledge; for if he made all things, and upholds and governs all things continually, it will follow, that he knows and perfectly sees all things, great and small, in heaven and earth, continually at one view; which cannot be without infinite understanding.

Being thus infinite in understanding and power, he must also be perfectly holy; for unholiness always argues some defect, some blindness. Where there is no darkness or delusion, there can be no unholiness. It is impossible that wickedness should consist with infinite light. God being infinite in power and knowledge, he must be self-sufficient and all-sufficient; therefore it is impossible that he should be under any temptation to do any thing amiss; for he can have no end in doing it. When any are tempted to do amiss, it is for selfish ends. But how can an all-sufficient Being, who wants nothing, be tempted to do evil for selfish ends? So that God is essentially holy, and nothing is more impossible than that God should do amiss.

2. As he is God, he is so *great*, that he is infinitely above all comprehension; and therefore it is unreasonable in us to quarrel with his dispensations, because they are mysterious. If he were a being that we could comprehend, he would not be God. It would be unreasonable to suppose any other, than that there should be many things in the nature of God, and in his works and government, to us mysterious, and which we never can fully find out.

What are we? and what do we make of ourselves, when we expect that God and his ways should be upon a level with our understandings? We are infinitely unequal to any such

thing, as comprehending God. We may less unreasonably expect that a nut-shell should contain the ocean: Job xi. 7. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." If we were sensible of the distance which there is between God and us, we should see the reasonableness of that interrogation of the apostle, Rom. ix. 20. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"

If we find fault with God's government, we virtually suppose ourselves fit to be God's counsellors; whereas it becomes us rather, with great humility and adoration, to cry out with the apostle, Rom. ix. 33. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever." If little children should rise up and find fault with the supreme legislature of a nation, or quarrel with the mysterious administrations of the sovereign, would it not be looked upon that they meddled with things too high for them? And what are we but babes? Our understandings are infinitely less than those of babes, in comparison with the wisdom of God. It becomes us therefore to be sensible of it, and to behave ourselves accordingly. Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, nor things that are too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child." This consideration alone of the infinite distance between God and us, and between God's understanding and our's, should be enough to still and quiet us concerning all that God does, however mysterious and unintelligible to us.—Nor have we any right to expect, that God should particularly explain to us the reason of his dispensations. It is fit that God should not give any account of his matters to us, worms of the dust, that we may be sensible of our distance from him, and adore and submit to him in humble reverence.

Therefore we find, that when Job was so full of difficulty about the divine dispensations, God did not answer him by particularly explaining the reasons of his mysterious providence; but by showing him what a poor worm, what a nothing

he was, and how much he himself was above him. This more became God than it would have done, to enter into a particular debate with him, or to unfold the mysterious difficulties: It became Job to submit to God in those things that he could not understand, and to this the reply tended to bring him. It is fit that God should dwell in thick darkness, or in light to which no man can approach, which no man hath seen nor can see, No wonder that a God of infinite glory shines with a brightness too strong and mighty for mortal eyes. For the angels themselves those mighty spirits, are represented as covering their faces in this light; Isa. vi.

3. As he is God, all things are his *own*, and he hath a right to dispose of them according to his own pleasure. All things in this lower world are his; Job. xli. 11. "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine. Yea the whole universe is God's; Deut. x. 14. "Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's; the earth also with all that is therein." All things are his, because all things are from him; they are wholly from him, and from him alone. Those things which are made by men, are not wholly from them. When man builds a house, it is not wholly from him: nothing of which the house is made has its being from him. But all creatures are wholly and entirely the fruits of God's power, and therefore it is fit that they should be subject to, and for his pleasure. Prov. xvi. 4.—And as all things are *from* God, so they are upheld in being *by* him, and would sink into nothing in a moment, if he did not uphold them. And all things are *to* him. Rom. x. 46. "For by him, and through him, and *to* him are all things." Col. i. 10. 17. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, all things were created *by* him and *for* him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. All mankind are his; their lives, and breath, and being; "for in him we live, and move, and have our being." Our souls and capacities are from him. Ezek. xviii. 4. "All souls are mine: as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son, is mine."

4. In that he his God, he is *worthy* to be sovereign over all things. Sometimes men are the owners of more than they are worthy of. But God is not only the owner of the whole world, as all is from and dependent on him; but such is his perfection, the excellency and dignity of his nature, that he is worthy of sovereignty over all. No man ought in the tem-

per of his mind to be opposite to God's exercising the sovereignty of the universe, as if he were not worthy of it; for to be the absolute sovereign of the universe is not a glory or dignity too great for him. All things in heaven and earth, angels and men are nothing in comparison with him; all are as the drop of the bucket, and as the light dust of the balance. It is therefore fit that every thing should be in his hands, to be disposed of according to his pleasure.—His will and pleasure are of infinitely greater importance than the will of creatures. It is fit that his will should take place though contrary to the will of all other beings; that he should make himself his own end; and order all things for himself.—God is possessed of such perfections and excellencies as to qualify him to be the absolute sovereign of the world.—Certainly it is more fit that all things be under the guidance of a perfect unerring wisdom, than that they should be left to themselves to fall in confusion, or be brought to pass by blind causes. Yea it is not fit that *any* affairs within the government of God should be left without the direction of his wise providence: least of all, things of the greatest importance.

It is absurd to suppose, that God is *obliged* to keep every creature from sinning and exposing himself to an adequate punishment. For if so, then it will follow, that there can be no such thing as a *moral government* of God over reasonable creatures; and it would be an absurdity for God to give commands; for he himself would be the party bound to see to the performance, and there could be no use of promises or threatenings. But if God may leave a creature to sin, and to expose himself to punishment, then it is much fitter and better that the matter should be ordered by wisdom, who should justly lie exposed by sin to punishment, and who not; than that it be left to come to pass by confused chance. It is unworthy of the Governor of the world to leave things to chance; it belongs to him to govern all things by wisdom.—And as God has *wisdom* to qualify him to be sovereign, so he has *power* also to enable him to execute the determinations of wisdom. And he is essentially and invariably *holy* and *righteous*, and infinitely *good:* whereby he is qualified to govern the world in the best manner.—Therefore, when he acts as sovereign of the world, it is fit that we should be still, and willingly submit, and in no wise oppose his having the glory of his sovereignty; but should in a sense of his worthiness, cheerfully ascribe it to him, and say, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the

glory for ever;" and say with those in Rev. v. 13. "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne."

5. In that he is God, he *will* be sovereign, and *will* act as such. He sits on the throne of his sovereignty, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He will be exalted in his sovereign power and dominion, as he himself declares; "I will be exalted among the Heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." He will have all men to know, that he is most high over all the earth. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand.—There is no such thing as frustrating, or baffling, or undermining his designs; for he is great in counsel, and wonderful in working. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord; whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever; nothing shall be put to it, nor any thing taken from it. He will work, and who shall let it? He is able to dash in pieces the enemy. If men join hand in hand, against him, to hinder or oppose his designs, he breaks the bow, he cuts the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire.——He kills, and he makes alive, he brings down and raises up just as he pleases. Isa. xlv. 6, 7. "That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else: I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."

Great men, and rich men, and wise men cannot hinder God from doing his pleasure. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, he accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor. There are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.—When he gives quietness, who can make trouble? When he hides his face, who can behold him? He breaketh down, and it cannot be built up again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening; when he purposeth, who shall disannul it? And when his hand is stretched out, who shall turn it back?——So there is no hindering God from being sovereign, and acting as such. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." He hath the keys of hell and of death: he openeth, and no man shutteth: he shutteth, and no man openeth. This

may show us the folly of opposing ourselves against the sovereign dispensations of God; and how much more wisely they act who quietly and sweetly submit to his sovereign will.

6. In that he is God, he is able to *avenge* himself on those who oppose his sovereignty. He is wise of heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against God and prospered! He that will contend with God must answer it. And what a poor creature is man to fight against God! Is he able to make his part good with him? Who ever of God's enemies deal proudly, he will show that he is above them. They will be but as the chaff before the whirlwind, and shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume into smoke, they shall consume away. "Who would set the briers and thorns against him in battle? He would go through them, he would burn them together." Isa. xxvii. 4.

APPLICATION.

A manifold improvement might be made of this doctrine, which a little reflection may suggest to each of us. But the improvement which I shall at this time make of it, shall be only in an *use of reproof* to such under convictions of sin, and fears of hell, as are not still, but oppose the sovereignty of God in the disposals of his grace. This doctrine shows the unreasonableness, and dreadful wickedness, of your refusing heartily to own the sovereignty of God in this matter. It shows that you know not *that God is God.* If you knew this, you would be inwardly still and quiet; you would humbly and calmly lie in the dust before a sovereign God, and would see sufficient reason for it.

In objecting and quarrelling about the righteousness of God's laws and threatenings, and his sovereign dispensations towards you and others, you oppose his *divinity*, you show your ignorance of his divine greatness and excellency, and that you cannot bear that he should have divine honour. It is from low mean thoughts of God, that you do in your minds oppose his sovereignty, that you are not sensible how dangerous your conduct is, and what an audacious thing it is for such a creature as man to strive with his Maker

What poor creatures are you, that you should set up yourselves for judges over the Most High; that you should take it upon you to call God to an account; that you should

say to the great Jehovah, what dost thou? and that you should pass sentence against him! If you knew that he is God, you would not act in this manner; but this knowledge would be sufficient to still and calm you concerning all God's dispensations, and you would say with Eli, in 1 Sam. iii. 18. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight."——But here I shall be more particular in several things.

1. It is from *mean thoughts* of God that you are not convinced that you have by your sins deserved his eternal wrath and curse. If you had any proper sense of the infinite majesty, greatness, and holiness of God, you would see, that to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and there to have no rest day nor night, is not a punishment more than equal to the demerit of sin.—You would not have so good a thought of yourselves; you would not be so clean and pure in your own eyes; you would see what vile, unworthy, hell-deserving creatures you are. If you had not little thoughts of God, and were to consider how you have set yourselves against him—how you have slighted him, his commandments and threatenings, and despised his goodness and mercy, how often you have disobeyed, how obstinate you have been, how your whole lives have been filled up with sin against God—you would not wonder that God threatens to destroy you for ever, but would wonder that he hath not actually done it before now.

If you had not mean thoughts of God, you would not find fault with him for not setting his love on you who never exercised any love to him. You would not think it unjust in God not to seek your interest and eternal welfare, who never would be persuaded at all to seek his glory; you would not think it unjust in him to slight and disregard you, who have so often and so long made light of God. If you had not mean thoughts of God, you never would think him obliged to bestow eternal salvation upon you, who have never been truly thankful for one mercy which you have already received of him.—What do you think of yourselves? what great ideas have you of yourselves? and what thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged to so much for you, though you treat him ever so ungratefully for the kindness which he hath already bestowed upon you all the days of your lives? It must be from little thoughts of God, that you think it unjust in him not to regard you when you call upon him; when he hath earnestly called to you, so long and so

often, and you would not be persuaded to hearken to him. What thoughts have you of God, that you think he is more obliged to hear what you say to him, than you are to regard what he says to you?

It is from diminutive thoughts of God, that you think he is obliged to show mercy to you when you seek it, though you have been for a long time wilfully sinning against him, provoking him to anger, and presuming that he would show you mercy when you should seek it. What kind of thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged, as it were, to yield himself up to be abused by men, so that when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace shall not be in his own power, but he must be obliged to dispense them at their call!

2. It is from little thoughts of God, that you quarrel against his justice in the *condemnation of sinners*, from the doctrine of original sin. It must be because you do not know him to be God, and will not allow him to be sovereign. It is for want of a sense how much God is above you, that those things in him which are above your comprehension, are such difficulties and stumbling blocks to you: it is for want of a sense how much the wisdom and understanding of God are above yours, and what poor, short-sighted, blind creatures you are, in comparison with him. If you were sensible what God is, you would see it most reasonable to expect that his ways should be far above the reason of man, and that he dwells in light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen, nor can see.—If men were sensible how excellent and perfect a Being he is, they would not be so apt to be jealous of him, and to suspect him in things which lie beyond their understandings. It would be no difficulty with them to trust God out of sight. What horrid arrogance in worms of the dust, that they should think they have wisdom enough to examine and determine concerning what God doth, and to pass sentence on it as unjust! If you were sensible how great and glorious a Being God is, it would not be such a difficulty with you to allow him the dignity of such absolute sovereignty, as that he should order as he pleases, whether every single man should stand for himself, or whether a common father should stand for all.

3. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you trust in your *own righteousness*, and think that God ought to respect you for it. If you knew how great a Being he is, if you saw that he is God indeed, you would see how unworthy, how misera-

ble a present it is to be offered to such a Being. It is because you are blind, and know not what a Being he is with whom you have to do, that you make so much of your own righteousness. If you had your eyes open to see that he is God indeed, you would wonder how you could think to commend yourselves to so great a Being by your gifts, by such poor affections, such broken prayers, wherein is so much hypocrisy, and so much selfishness.—If you had not very mean thoughts of God, you would wonder that ever you could think of purchasing the favour and love of so great a God by your services. You would see that it would be unworthy of God to bestow such a mercy upon you, as peace with him, and his everlasting love, and the enjoyment of himself, for such a price as you have to offer; and that he would exceedingly dishonour himself in so doing.—If you saw what God is, you would exclaim, as Job did, Job xlii. 5, 6. "Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And as Isaiah did, chap vi. 5. "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

4. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you contend with him, because he bestows grace on some, and not on others. Thus God doth: he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; he takes one, and leaves another, of those who are in like circumstances; as it is said of Jacob and Esau, while they were not yet born, and had done neither good nor evil, Rom. ix. 10—13. With this sinners often quarrel; but they who upon this ground quarrel with God, suppose him to be *bound* to bestow his grace on sinners. For if he be bound to none, then he may take his choice, and bestow it on whom he pleases; and his bestowing it on some brings no obligation on him to bestow it on others. Has God no right to his own grace? is it not at his own disposal? and is God incapable of making a gift or present of it to any man? for a person cannot make a present of that which is not his own, or in his own right. It is impossible to *give a debt.*

But what a low thought of God does this argue! Consider what it is you would make of God. Must he be so tied up, that he cannot use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts? Is he obliged to bestow them on one, because it is his pleasure to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right to dispose of his gifts, as a man has of his money? or is it because God is not so great, and therefore should

be more subject, more under bounds, than men? Is not God worthy to have as absolute a propriety in his goods as man has in his? At this rate, God cannot make a present of any thing; he has nothing of his own to bestow. If he have a mind to show a peculiar favour to some, to lay some under special obligations, he cannot do it, on the supposition, because his favour is not at his own disposal! The truth is, men have low thoughts of God, or else they would willingly ascribe sovereignty to him in this matter. Matt. xx. 15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

God is pleased to show mercy to his enemies, according to his own sovereign pleasure. And surely it is fit he should. How unreasonable is it to think that God stands bound to his enemies! Therefore consider what you do in quarrelling with God, and opposing his sovereignty. Consider with whom it is you contend. Let all who are sensible of their misery, and afraid of the wrath of God, consider these things. Those of you who have been long seeking salvation, but are in great terrors through fear that God will destroy you, consider what you have heard, *be still, and know that he is God.* When God seems to turn a deaf ear to your cries; when he seems to frown upon you; when he shows mercy to others, your equals, or those who are worse, and who have been seeking a less time than you;—be still. Consider who he is that disposes and orders these things. You shall consider it; you shall know it: he will make all men to know that *he is God.* You shall either know it for your good here, by submission, or to your cost hereafter.

SERMON III*.

GREAT GUILT NO OBSTACLE

TO THE

PARDON OF THE RETURNING SINNER.

PSALM, XXV. 11.

For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great.

IT is evident by some passages in this psalm, that when it was penned, it was a time of affliction and danger with David. This appears particularly by the 15th and following verses: "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net," &c. His distress makes him think of his sins, and leads him to confess them, and to cry to God for pardon, as is suitable in a time of affliction. See verse 7. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;" and verse 18. "Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins."

It is observable in the text, what arguments the Psalmist makes use of in pleading for pardon.

1. He pleads for pardon *for God's name's sake.* He has no expectation of pardon for the sake of any righteousness or worthiness of his for any good deeds he had done, or any compensation he had made for his sins; though if man's righteousness could be a just plea, David would have

* Not dated. All the Sermons in this collection which are not dated, are supposed to have been written before the year 1733, as from that period our author dated his Sermons.

had as much to plead as most. But he begs that God would do it for his own name's sake, for his own glory, for the glory of his own free grace, and for the honour of his own covenant-faithfulness.

2. The Psalmist pleads the *greatness of his sins* as an argument for mercy. He not only doth not plead his own righteousness, or the smallness of his sins; he not only doth not say, Pardon mine iniquity, for I have done much good to counterbalance it; or, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is small, and thou hast no great reason to be angry with me; mine iniquity is not so great, that thou hast any just cause to remember it against me; mine offence is not such but that thou mayest well enough overlook it: but on the contrary he says, *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great:* he pleads the greatness of his sin, and not the smallness of it; he enforces his prayer with this consideration, that his sins are very heinous.

But how could he make this a plea for pardon? I answer, Because the greater his iniquity was, the more *need* he had of pardon. It is as much as if he had said, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is so great that I cannot bear the punishment; my sin is so great that I am in necessity of pardon; my case will be exceedingly miserable, unless thou be pleased to pardon me. He makes use of the greatness of his sin, to enforce his plea for pardon, as a man would make use of the greatness of calamity in begging for relief. When a beggar begs for bread, he will plead the greatness of his poverty and necessity. When a man in distress cries for pity, what more suitable plea can be urged than the extremity of his case?—And God allows such a plea as this: for he is moved to mercy towards us by nothing in us but the miserableness of our case. He doth not pity sinners because they are worthy, but because they need his pity.

Doctrine. *If we truly come to God for mercy, the greatness of our sin will be no impediment to pardon.*—If it were an impediment, David would never have used it as a plea for pardon, as we find he does in the text.—The following things are needful in order that we truly come to God for mercy:

I. That we should see *our misery*, and be *sensible* of our need of mercy. They who are not sensible of their misery cannot truly look to God for mercy; for it is the very notion of divine mercy, that it is the goodness and grace of God to the miserable. Without misery in the object, there can

be no exercise of mercy. To suppose mercy without supposing misery, or pity without calamity, is a contradiction: therefore men cannot look upon themselves as proper objects of mercy, unless they first know themselves to be miserable; and so, unless this be the case, it is impossible that they should come to God for mercy. They must be sensible that they are the children of wrath; that the law is against them, and that they are exposed to the curse of it: that the wrath of God abideth on them; and that he is angry with them every day while they are under the guilt of sin.—They must be sensible that it is a very dreadful thing to be the object of the wrath of God; that it is a very awful thing to have him for their enemy; and that they cannot bear his wrath. They must be sensible that the guilt of sin makes them miserable creatures, whatever temporal enjoyments they have; that they can be no other than miserable, undone creatures, so long as God is angry with them; that they are without strength, and must perish, and that eternally, unless God help them. They must see that their case is utterly desperate, for any thing that any one else can do for them; that they hang over the pit of eternal misery; and that they must necessarily drop into it, if God have not mercy on them.

II. They must be sensible that they *are not worthy* that God should have mercy on them. They who truly come to God for mercy, come as beggars, and not as creditors: they come for mere mercy, for sovereign grace, and not for any thing that is due. Therefore, they must see that the misery under which they lie is justly brought upon them, and that the wrath to which they are exposed is *justly* threatened against them; and that they have *deserved* that God should *be* their enemy, and should *continue* to be their enemy. They must be sensible that it would be just with God to do as he hath threatened in his holy law, viz. make them the objects of his wrath and curse in hell to all eternity.—They who come to God for mercy in a right manner are not disposed to find fault with his severity; but they come in a sense of their own utter unworthiness, as with ropes about their necks, and lying in the dust at the foot of mercy.

III. They must come to God for mercy in and *through Jesus Christ* alone. All their hope of mercy must be from the consideration of what he is, what he hath done, and what he hath suffered; and that there is no other name given

under heaven, among men, whereby we can be saved, but that of Christ; that he is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world: that his blood cleanses from all sin, and that he is so worthy, that all sinners who are in him may well be pardoned and accepted.—It is impossible that any should *come* to God for mercy, and at the same time have no *hope* of mercy. Their coming to God for it, implies that they have some hope of obtaining, otherwise they would not think it worth the while to come. But they that come in a right manner have all their hope through Christ, or from the consideration of his redemption, and the sufficiency of it.—If persons thus come to God for mercy, the greatness of their sins will be no impediment to pardon. Let their sins be ever so many, and great, and aggravated, it will not make God in the least degree more backward to pardon them. This may be made evident by the following considerations:

1. *The mercy of God* is as sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins, as for the least; and that because his mercy is infinite. That which is infinite, is as much above what is great, as it is above what is small. Thus God being infinitely great, he is as much above kings as he is above beggars; he as much above the highest angel, as he is above the meanest worm. One infinite measure doth not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite than another.—So the mercy of God being infinite, it must be as sufficient for the pardon of all sin, as of one. If one of the least sins be not beyond the mercy of God, so neither are the greatest, or ten thousand of them.—However, it must be acknowledged, that this alone doth not prove the doctrine. For though the mercy of God may be as sufficient for the pardon of great sins as others; yet there may be other obstacles, besides the want of mercy. The mercy of God may be sufficient, and yet the other attributes may oppose the dispensation of mercy in these cases.—Therefore I observe,

2. That the *satisfaction of Christ* is as sufficient for the removal of the greatest guilt, as the least: 1 John, i. 7. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." Acts xiii. 39. "By him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." All the sins of those who truly come to God for mercy, let them be what they will, are satisfied for, if God be true who tells us so; and if they be satisfied for, surely it is not incredible, that God should be ready to pardon them. So that Christ having fully satisfied for all sin, or having wrought out

a satisfaction that is sufficient for all, it is now no way inconsistent with the glory of the divine attributes to pardon the greatest sins of those who in a right manner come unto him for it.—God may now pardon the greatest sinners without any prejudice to the honour of his holiness. The holiness of God will not suffer him to give the least countenance to sin, but inclines him to give proper testimonies of his hatred of it. But Christ having satisfied for sin, God can now love the sinner, and give no countenance at all to sin, however great a sinner he may have been. It was a sufficient testimony of God's abhorrence of sin, that he poured out his wrath on his own dear Son, when he took the guilt of it upon himself. Nothing can more show God's abhorrence of sin than this. If all mankind had been eternally damned, it would not have been so great a testimony of it.

God may, through Christ, pardon the *greatest sinner* without any prejudice to the honour of his majesty. The honour of the divine majesty indeed requires satisfaction; but the sufferings of Christ fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honourable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and suffers so much for him, it fully repairs the injury done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. The sufferings of Christ fully satisfy justice. The justice of God, as the supreme Governor and Judge of the world, requires the punishment of sin. The supreme Judge must judge the world according to a rule of justice. God doth not show mercy as a judge, but as a sovereign; therefore his exercise of mercy as a sovereign, and his justice as a judge, must be made consistent one with another; and this is done by the sefferings of Christ, in which sin is punished fully, and justice answered. Rom. iii. 25, 26. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—The law is no impediment in the way of the pardon of the greatest sin, if men do but truly come to God for mercy: For Christ hath fulfilled the law, he hath borne the curse of it, in his sufferings; Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

3. Christ *will not refuse* to save the greatest sinners, who in a right manner come to God for mercy; for this is his work. It is his business to be a Saviour of Sinners; it is the work

upon which he came into the world; and therefore he will not object to it. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Matt. ix. 13. Sin is the very evil which he came into the world to remedy: therefore he will not object to any man, that he is very sinful. The more sinful he is, the more need of Christ.—The sinfulness of man was the reason of Christ's coming into the world; this is the very misery from which he came to deliver men. The more they have of it, the more need they have of being delivered: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," Matt. ix. 12. The physician will not make it an objection against healing a man who applies to him, that he stands in great need of his help. If a physician of compassion comes among the sick and wounded, surely he will not refuse to heal those that stand in most need of healing, if he be able to heal them.

4. Herein doth the *glory of grace* by the redemption of Christ much consist, viz. in its sufficiency for the pardon of the greatest sinners. The whole contrivance of the way of salvation is for this end, to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on his heart from all eternity to glorify this attribute; and therefore it is, that the device of saving sinners by Christ was conceived. The greatness of divine grace appears very much in this, that God by Christ saves the greatest offenders. The greater the guilt of any sinner is, the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifested in his pardon: Rom. v. 20. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The apostle, when telling how great a sinner he had been, takes notice of the abounding of grace in his pardon, of which his great guilt was the occasion: 1 Tim. i. 13. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The Redeemer is glorified, in that he proves sufficient to redeem those who are exceeding sinful, in that his blood proves sufficient to wash away the greatest guilt, in that he is able to save men to the uttermost, and in that he redeems even from the greatest misery. It is the honour of Christ to save the greatest sinners, when they come to him, as it is the honour of a physician that he cures the most desperate diseases or wounds. Therefore, no doubt, Christ will be willing to save the greatest sinners, if they come to him; for he will not be backward to glorify himself, and to commend the value and virtue of his own blood. Seeing he hath so

laid out himself to redeem sinners, he will not be unwilling to show, that he is able to redeem to the uttermost.

5. Pardon is as much *offered and promised* to the greatest sinners as any, if they will come aright to God for mercy. The invitations of the gospel are always in universal terms; as, Oh, every one that thirsteth; come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and whosoever will, let him come. And the voice of Wisdom is to men in general: Prov. viii. 4. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Not to moral men, or religious men, but *to you, O men.* So Christ promises, John vi. 37. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." This is the direction of Christ to his apostles, after his resurrection, Mark xvi. 15, 16. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved." Which is agreeable to what the apostle saith, that "the gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven," Col. i. 23.

APPLICATION.

The proper *use* of this subject is, to encourage sinners whose consciences are burdened with a sense of guilt, immediately to go to God through Christ for mercy. If you go in the manner we have described, the arms of mercy are open to embrace you. You need not be at all the more fearful of coming because of your sins, let them be ever so black. If you had as much guilt lying on each of your souls as all the wicked men in the world, and all the damned souls in hell; yet if you come to God for mercy, sensible of your own vileness, and seeking pardon only through the free mercy of God in Christ, you would not need to be afraid; the greatness of your sins would be no impediment to your pardon. Therefore, if your souls be burdened, and you are distressed for fear of hell, you need not bear that burden, and distress any longer. If you are but *willing*, you may freely come and unload yourselves, and cast all your burdens on Christ, and rest in him.

But here I shall speak to some OBJECTIONS which some awakened sinners may be ready to make against what I now exhort them to.

I. Some may be ready to object, I have spent my youth and all the best of my life in sin, and I am afraid God will not accept of me, when I offer him only mine old age.—To this

I would answer,—1. Hath God said any where, that he will not accept of *old sinners* who come to him? God hath often made offers and promises in universal terms; and is there any such exception put in? Doth Christ say, All that thirst, let them come to me and drink, *except* old sinners? Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, except old sinners, and I will give you rest? Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out, if he be not an old sinner? Did you ever read any such exception any where in the Bible? and why should you give way to exception which you make out of your own heads, or rather which the devil puts into your heads, and which have no foundation in the word of God?—Indeed it is more rare that old sinners are willing to come, than others; but if they do come, they are as readily accepted as any whatever.

2. When God accepts of young persons, it is not for the sake of the service which they are like to do him afterwards, or because youth is better worth accepting than old age. You seem entirely to mistake the matter, in thinking that God will not accept of you because you are old; as though he readily accepted of persons in their youth, because their youth is better worth his acceptance; whereas it is only for the sake of Jesus Christ, that God is willing to accept of any.

You say, your life is almost spent, and you are afraid that the best time for serving God is past; and that therefore God will not now accept of you; as if it were for the sake of the service which persons are like to do him, after they are converted, that he accepts of them. But a self-righteous spirit is at the bottom of such objections. Men cannot get off from the notion, that it is for some goodness or service of their own, either done or expected to be done, that God accepts of persons, and receives them into favour.—Indeed they who deny God their youth, the best part of their lives, and spend it in the service of Satan, dreadfully sin and provoke God; and he very often leaves them to hardness of heart, when they are grown old. But if they are willing to accept of Christ when old, he is as ready to receive them as any others; for in that matter God hath respect only to Christ and his worthiness.

II. But I am afraid that I have committed sins that are peculiar to reprobates. I have sinned against light, and strong convictions of conscience; I have sinned presumptuously; and have so resisted the strivings of the Spirit of God, that I am afraid I have committed such sins as none of God's elect ever commit. I cannot think that God will ever leave one whom he intends to save, to go on and commit sins against so

much light and conviction, and with such horrid presumption. —Others may say, I have had risings of heart against God; blasphemous thoughts, a spiteful and malicious spirit; and have abused mercy and the strivings of the Spirit, trampled upon the Saviour, and my sins are such as are peculiar to those who are reprobated to eternal damnation. To all this I would answer,

1. There is no sin peculiar to reprobates but the sin against the Holy Ghost. Do you read of any other in the word of God? And if you do not read of any there, what ground have you to think any such thing? What other rule have we, by which to judge of such matters, but the divine word? If we venture to go beyond that, we shall be miserably in the dark. When we pretend to go further in our determinations than the word of God, Satan takes us up, and leads us. It seems to you that such sins are peculiar to the reprobate, and such as God never forgives. But what reason can you give for it, if you have no word of God to reveal it? It is because you cannot see how the mercy of God is sufficient to pardon, or the blood of Christ to cleanse from such presumptuous sins? If so, it is because you never yet saw how great the mercy of God is; you never saw the sufficiency of the blood of Christ, and you know not how far the virtue of it extends. Some elect persons have been guilty of all manner of sins, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; and unless you have been guilty of this, you have not been guilty of any that are peculiar to reprobates.

2. Men may be less likely to believe, for sins which they have committed, and not the less readily pardoned when they do believe. It must be acknowledged that some sinners are in more danger of hell than others. Though all are in great danger, some are less likely to be saved. Some are less likely ever to be converted and to come to Christ: but all who do come to him are alike readily accepted; and there is as much encouragement for one man to come to Christ as another.—Such sins as you mention are indeed exceeding heinous and provoking to God, and do in an especial manner bring the soul into danger of damnation, and into danger of being given to final hardness of heart; and God more commonly gives men up to the judgment of final hardness for such sins, than for others. Yet they are not peculiar to reprobates; there is but one sin that is so, viz. that against the Holy Ghost. And notwithstanding the sins which you have committed, if you can find it in your hearts to come to Christ, and close with him, you will

be accepted not at all the less readily because you have committed such sins.—Though God doth more rarely cause some sorts of sinners to come to Christ than others; it is not because his mercy or the redemption of Christ is not as sufficient for them as others, but because in wisdom he sees fit so to dispense his grace, for a restraint upon the wickedness of men; and because it is his will to give converting grace in the use of means, among which this is one, viz. to lead a moral and religious life, and agreeable to our light, and the convictions of our consciences. But when once any sinner is willing to come to Christ, mercy is as ready for him as for any. There is no consideration at all had of his sins; let him have been ever so sinful, his sins are not remembered; God doth not upbraid him with them.

III. But had I not better stay till I shall have made myself better, before I presume to come to Christ. I have been, and see myself to be very wicked now; but am in hopes of mending myself, and rendering myself at least not so wicked: then I shall have more courage to come to God for mercy.—In answer to this,

1. Consider how unreasonably you act. You are striving to set up yourselves for your own saviours; you are striving to get something of your own, on the account of which you may the more readily be accepted. So that by this it appears that you do not seek to be accepted only on Christ's account. And is not this to rob Christ of the glory of being your only Saviour? Yet this is the way in which you are hoping to make Christ willing to save you.

2. You can never come to Christ at all, unless you first see that he will not accept of you the more readily for any thing that you can do. You must first see, that it is utterly in vain for you to try to make yourselves better on any such account. You must see that you can never make yourselves any more worthy, or less unworthy, by any thing which you can perform.

3. If ever you truly come to Christ, you must see that there is enough in him for your pardon, though you be no better than you are. If you see not the sufficiency of Christ to pardon you, without any righteousness of your own to recommend you, you never will come so as to be accepted of him. The way to be accepted is to come—not on any such encouragement, that now you have made yourselves better, and more worthy, or not so unworthy, but—on the mere encouragement of Christ's worthiness, and God's mercy.

4. If ever you truly come to Christ, you must come to him to make you better. You must come as a patient comes to his physician, with his diseases or wounds to be cured. Spread all your wickedness before him, and do not plead your goodness; but plead your badness, and your necessity on that account: and say, as the Psalmist in the text, not pardon mine iniquity, for it is not so great as it was, but, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

SERMON IV*.

THE MOST HIGH A PRAYER-HEARING GOD.

PSALM ~~xlv.~~ 65. 2.

O thou that hearest Prayer.

THIS psalm seems to be written, either, as a psalm of praise to God for some remarkable answer of prayer, in the bestowment of some public mercy; or else, on occasion of some special faith and confidence which David had that his prayer would be answered It is probable that this mercy bestowed, or expected to be bestowed, was some great public mercy, for which David had been very earnest and importunate, and had annexed a vow to his prayer; and that he had vowed to God, that if he would grant him his request he would render him praise and glory.—This seems to be the reason why he expresses himself as he does in the first verse of the psalm: "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed;" i. e. that praise which I have vowed to give thee, on the answer of my prayer, waiteth for thee, to be given thee as soon as thou shalt have answered my prayer; and the vow which I made to thee shall be performed.

In the verse of the text, there is a prophecy of the glorious times of the gospel, when "all flesh shall come" to the true God, as to *the God who heareth prayer*; which is here mentioned as what distinguishes the true God from the gods to whom the nations prayed and sought, those gods who cannot hear, and cannot answer their prayer. The time was coming when all flesh should come to that God who *doth hear prayer*.

* Dated January 8, 1735—6. Preached on a fast appointed on the account of an epidemical sickness at the eastward (of Boston.)

—Hence we gather this doctrine, *That it is the character of the Most High, that he is a God who hears prayer.*

I shall handle this point in the following method:

1. Show that the Most High is a *God that hears prayer.*
2. That he is *eminently* such a God.
3. That herein he is *distinguished* from all false gods.
4. Give the *reasons* of the doctrine.

I. The Most High is a God that *hears prayer.* Though he is infinitely above all, and stands in no need of creatures; yet he is graciously pleased to take a merciful notice of poor worms of the dust. He manifests and presents himself as the object of prayer, appears as sitting on a mercy seat, that men may come to him by prayer. When they stand in need of any thing, he allows them to come, and ask it of him; and he is wont to hear their prayers. God in his word hath given many promises that he will hear their prayers; the scripture is full of such examples; and in his dispensations towards his church, manifests himself to be a God that hears prayer.

Here it may be inquired, What is meant by God's hearing prayer? There are two things implied in it.

1. His *accepting* the supplications of those who pray to him. Their address to him is well taken, he is well pleased with it. He approves of their asking such mercies as they request of him, and approves of their manner of doing it. He accepts of their prayers as an offering to him; he accepts the honour they do him in prayer.

2. He *acts* agreeably to his acceptance. He sometimes manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by special discoveries of his mercy and sufficiency which he makes to them *in prayer*, or immediately after. While they are praying, he gives them sweet views of his glorious grace, purity, sufficiency, and sovereignty; and enables them, with great quietness to rest in him, to leave themselves and their prayers with him, submitting to his will, and trusting in his grace and faithfulness. Such a manifestation God seems to have made of himself in prayer to *Hannah*, which quieted and composed her mind, and took away her sadness. We read (1 Sam. i.) how earnest she was, and how exercised in her mind, and that she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. But she came and poured out her soul before God, and spake out of the abundance of her complaint and grief; then we read, that she went away, and did eat, and her countenance was no more

sad, ver. 13.; which seems to have been from some refreshing discoveries which God had made of himself to her, to enable her quietly to submit to his will, and trust in his mercy, whereby God manifested his acceptance of her.—Not that I conclude persons can hence argue, that the particular thing which they ask will certainly be given them, or that they can particularly foretell from it what God will do in answer to their prayers, any farther than he has promised in his word; yet God may, and doubtless does, thus testify his acceptance of their prayers, and from hence they may confidently rest in his providence, in his merciful ordering and disposing, with respect to the thing which they ask.—Again, God manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by *doing* for them agreeably to their needs and supplications. He not only inwardly and spiritually discovers his mercy to their souls by his Spirit, but outwardly by dealing mercifully with them in his providence, in consequence of their prayers, and by causing an agreeableness between his providence and their prayers.——I proceed now,

II. To show that the Most High is *eminently* a God that hears prayer. This appears in several things.

1. In his giving such *free access* to him by prayer. God in his word manifests himself ready at all times to allow us this privilege. He sits on a throne of grace; and there is no vail to hide this throne, and keep us from it. The vail is rent from the top to the bottom; the way is open at all times, and we may go to God as often as we please. Although God be infinitely above us, yet we may come with boldness: Heb. iv. 14, 16. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." How wonderful is it that such worms as we should be allowed to come boldly at all times to so great a God!—Thus God indulges all kinds of persons, of all nations, Cor. i. 2, 3. "Unto all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours; grace be unto you, &c." Yea, God allows the most vile and unworthy; the greatest sinners are allowed to come through Christ. And he not only allows, but encourages, and frequently invites them; yea, manifests himself as delighting in being sought to by prayer: Prov. xv. 8. "The prayer of the upright is his delight;" and in Cant. ii. 14. we have Christ saying to the spouse, "O my dove, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice." The voice of the saints in prayer is sweet unto

Christ; he delights to hear it. He allows them to be earnest and importunate; yea, to the degree as to take no denial, and as it were to give him no rest, and even encouraging them so to do: Is. lxiii. 6, 7. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest." Thus Christ encourages us, in the parable of the importunate widow and the unjust judge, Luke xviii. So, in the parable of the man who went to his friend at midnight, Luke xi. 5, &c.

Thus God allowed Jacob to wrestle with him, yea, to be resolute in it; "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." It is noticed with approbation, when men are violent for the kingdom of heaven, and take it by force. Thus Christ suffered the blind man to be most importunate and unceasing in his cries to him, Luke xviii. 38, 39. He continued crying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Others who were present rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, looking upon it as too great a boldness, and an indecent behaviour towards Christ, thus to cry after him as he passed by. But Christ did not rebuke him, but stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him, saying, "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?" And when the blind man had told him, Christ graciously granted his request.—The freedom of access that God gives, appears also in allowing us to come to him by prayer for every thing we need, both temporal and spiritual; whatever evil we need to be delivered from, or good we would obtain: Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

2. That God is eminently of this character, appears in his hearing prayer *so readily*. He often manifests his readiness to hear prayer, by giving an answer so speedily, sometimes while they are yet speaking, and sometimes before they pray, when they only have a design of praying. So ready is God to hear prayer, that he takes notice of the first purpose of praying, and sometimes bestows mercy thereupon: Isa. lxv. 24. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." We read, that when Daniel was making humble and earnest supplication, God sent an angel to comfort him, and to assure him of an answer, Dan. ix. 20—24. When God defers for the present to answer the prayer of faith, it is not from any backwardness to answer, but for the good of his people sometimes, that they may be better prepared for the mercy before they receive it, or because another time would

be the best and fittest on some other account: and even then, when God seems to delay an answer, the answer is indeed hastened, as in Luke xviii. 7, 8. "And shall not God avenge his own elect that cry unto him day and night, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily." Sometimes, when the blessing seems to tarry, God is even then at work to bring it about in the best time and the best manner: Hab. ii. 3. "Though it tarry, wait for it; it will come, it will not tarry."

3. That the Most High is eminently one that hears prayer, appears by his giving *so liberally* in answer to prayer; Jam. i. 5, 6. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Men often show their backwardness to give, both by the scantiness of their gifts, and by upbraiding those who ask of them. They will be sure to put them in mind of some faults, when they give them any thing; but, on the contrary, God both gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our undeservings. He is plenteous and rich in his communications to those who call upon him: Psal. lxxxvi. 5. "For thou art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee;" and Rom. x. 12. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."—Sometimes, God not only gives the thing asked, but he gives them more than is asked So he did to Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 12, 13. "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and a understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any rise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days." Yea, God will give more to his people than they can either ask or think, as is implied in Ephes. iii. 20. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

4. That God is eminently of this character, appears by the *greatness* of the things which he hath often done in answer to prayer. Thus, when Esau was coming out against his brother Jacob, with four hundred men, without doubt fully resolved to cut him off, Jacob prayed, and God turned the heart of Esau, so that he met Jacob in a very friendly manner; Gen. xxxii. So in Egypt, at the prayer of Moses, God brought those dreadful plagues, and at his prayer removed them again. When Samson was ready to perish with thirst, he prayed to

God, and he brought water out of a dry jaw-bone, for his supply, Judg. xv. 18, 19. And when he prayed, after his strength was departed from him, God strengthened him, so as to pull down the temple of Dagon on the Philistines; so that those whom he slew at his death were more than all those whom he slew in his life.—Joshua prayed to God, and said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon;" and God heard his prayer, and caused the sun and moon to stand still accordingly. The prophet "Elijah was a man of like passion" with us; "and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit;" as the apostle James observes, Jam. v. 17, 18. So God confounded the army of Zerah, the Ethiopian, of a thousand thousand, in answer to the prayer of Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 9, &c. And God sent an angel, and slew in one night an hundred and eighty-five thousand men of Sennacharib's army, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, 2 Kings xix. 14—16, 19, 35.

5. This truth appears, in that God is, as it were, *overcome* by prayer. When God is displeased by sin, manifests his displeasure, comes out against us in his providence, and seems to oppose and resist us; in such cases, God is, speaking after the manner of men, overcome by humble and fervent prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," Jam. v. 16. It has a great power in it; such a prayer-hearing God is the Most High, that he graciously manifests himself as conquered by it. Thus God appeared to oppose Jacob in what he sought of him; yet Jacob was resolute, and overcame. Therefore God changed his name from Jacob to Israel; for, says he, "as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Gen. xxxii. 28. A mighty prince indeed! Hos. xii. 4. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto unto him."—When his anger was provoked against Israel, and he appeared to be ready to consume them in his hot displeasure, Moses stood in the gap, and by his humble and earnest prayer and supplication averted the stroke of divine vengeance. Exod. xxxii. 9, &c. and Numb. xiv. 11, &c.

III. Herein the Most High God is *distinguished* from false gods. The true God is the only one of this character; there is no other of whom it may be said, that *he heareth prayer*.

Many of those things that are worshipped as gods are *idols* made by their worshippers; mere stocks and stones that know nothing. They are indeed made with ears; but they hear not the prayers of them that cry to them. They have eyes; but they see not, &c. Psal. xcv. 5, 9.—Others, though not the work of men's hands, yet are things *without life*. Thus, many worship the sun, moon, and stars, which, though glorious creatures, yet are not capable of knowing any thing of the wants and desire of those who pray to them. —Some worship certain kinds of *animals*, as the Egyptians were wont to worship bulls, which, though not without life, yet are destitute of that reason whereby they would be capable of knowing the requests of their worshippers. Others worship *devils* instead of the true God: 1 Cor. x. 20. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrafice to devils." These, though beings of great powers, have not knowledge necessary to capacitate them fully to understand the state, circumstances, necessities, and desires of those who pray to them. But the true God perfectly knows the circumstances of every one that prays to him throughout the world. Though millions pray to him at once, in different parts of the world, it is no more difficult for him who is infinite in knowledge, to take notice of all than of one alone. God is so perfect in knowledge, that he doth not need to be informed by us, in order to a knowledge of our wants; for he knows what things we need before we ask him. The worshippers of false gods were wont to lift their voices and cry aloud, lest their gods should fail of hearing them, as Elijah tauntingly bid the worshippers of Baal do, 1 Kings, xviii. 27. But the true God hears the silent petitions of his people. He needs not that we should cry aloud; yea, he knows and perfectly understands when we only pray in our hearts, as Hannah did, 1 Sam. i. 13.

Idols are but vanities and lies; in them is no help. As to power or knowledge, they are nothing; as the apostle says, 1 Cor. viii. 4. "An idol is nothing in the world." As to images, they are so far from having power to answer prayer, that they are not able to act; "They have hands, and handle not, feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat." They, therefore, that make them and pray to them, are senseless and sottish, and make themselves as it were, stocks and stones, like unto them: Psal. cxv. 7, 8, and Jer. x. 5. "They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot

go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil; neither also is it in them to do good." As to the hosts of heaven, the the sun, moon, and stars, although mankind receive benefit by them, yet they act only by necessity of nature; therefore they have no power to do any thing in answer to prayers. And devils, though worshipped as gods, are not able, if they had disposition, to make those happy who worship them, and can do nothing at all but by divine permission, and as subject to the disposal of Divine providence.—When the children of Israel departed from the true God to idols, and yet cried to him in their distress, he reproved them for their foliy, by bidding them cry to the gods whom they had served, for deliverance in the time of their tribulation. Josh. x. 14. So God challenges those gods themselves, Isa. xii. 23, 24. "Show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and behold it together. Behold ye are of nothing, and your work of nought; an abomination is he that chuseth you."—These false gods, instead of helping those who pray to them, cannot help themselves. The devils are miserable tormented spirits; they are bound in chains of darkness for their rebellion against the true God, and cannot deliver themselves. Nor have they any more disposition to help mankind, than a parcel of hungry wolves or lions would have to protect and help a flock of lambs. And those that worship and pray to them get not their good-will by serving them: all the reward that Satan will give them for the service which they do him is to devour them.—I proceed now,

IV. To give the *reasons* of the doctrine; which I would do in answer to these two inquiries: first, Why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies, and secondly, Why God is so ready to hear the prayers of men?

INQ. I. Why doth God require prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies?

It is not in order that God may be *informed* of our wants or desires. He is omniscient, and with respect to his knowledge unchangeable. God never gains any knowledge by information. He knows what we want, a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves, before we ask him. For though, speaking after the manner of men, God is sometimes represented as if he were moved and persuaded by the prayers of his people; yet it is not to be thought that God is pro-

perly moved or made willing by our prayers; for it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God, than new knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the spring of God's beneficence is within himself only; he is self-moved; and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, viz. in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea, when he has promised it; as Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37. "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be an antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer.—When the people of God are stirred up to prayer, it is the effect of his intention to show mercy; therefore he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

There may be two reasons given why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercy; one especially respects God, and the other respects ourselves.

1. With respect to *God*, prayer is but a sensible acknowledgment of our dependence on him to his glory. As he hath made all things for his own glory, so he will be glorified and acknowledged by his creatures; and it is fit that he should require this of those who would be the subjects of his mercy. That we, when we desire to receive any mercy from him, should humbly supplicate the Divine Being for the bestowment of that mercy, is but a suitable acknowledgment of our dependence on the power and mercy of God for that which we need, and but a suitable honour paid to the great Author and Fountain of all good.

2. With respect to *ourselves*, God requires prayers of us in order to the bestowment of mercy, because it tends to prepare us for its reception. Fervent prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart. Hereby is excited a sense of our need and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same time earnest desires for it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, to rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it. Prayer, with suitable confession, may excite a sense of our unworthiness of the mercy we seek; and the placing of ourselves in the immediate presence of God, may make us sensible of his majesty, and in a sense fit to receive

mercy of him. Our prayer to God may excite in us a suitable sense and consideration of our dependence on God for the mercy we ask, and a suitable exercise of faith in God's sufficiency, that so we may be prepared to glorify his name when the mercy is received.

INQ. II. Why is God *so ready* to hear the prayers of men? To this I answer,

1. Because he is a God of infinite grace and mercy. It is indeed a very wonderful thing, that so great a God should be so ready to hear our prayers, though we are so despicable and unworthy: that he should give free access at all times to every one; should allow us to be importunate without esteeming it an indecent boldness; should be so rich in mercy to them that call upon him; that worms of the dust should have such power with God by prayer; that he should do such great things in answer to their prayers, and should show himself, as it were, overcome by them. This is very wonderful, when we consider the distance between God and us, and how we have provoked him by our sins, and how unworthy we are of the least gracious notice. It cannot be from any need that God stands in of us; for our goodness extendeth not to him. Neither can it be from any thing in us to incline the heart of God to us; it cannot be from any worthiness in our prayers, which are in themselves polluted things. But it is because God delights in mercy and condescension. He is herein infinitely distinguished from all other gods: he is the great fountain of all good, from whom goodness flows as light from the sun.

2. We have a glorious Mediator, who has prepared the way, that our prayers may be heard consistently with the honour of God's justice and majesty. Not only has God in himself mercy sufficient for this, but the Mediator has provided that this mercy may be exercised consistently with the divine honour. Through him we may come to God for mercy; he is the way, the truth, and the life; no man can come to the Father but by him. This Mediator hath done three things to make way for the hearing of our prayers.

(1.) He hath by his blood made *atonement* for sin; so that our guilt need not stand in the way, as a separating wall between God and us, and that our sins might not be a cloud through which our prayers cannot pass. By his atonement he hath made the way to the throne of grace open. God would have been infinitely gracious if there had been no

Mediator; but the way to the mercy-seat would have been blocked up. But Christ hath removed whatever stood in the way. The vail which was before the mercy-seat "is rent from the top to the bottom," by the death of Christ. If it had not been for this, our guilt would have remained as a wall of brass to hinder our approach. But all is removed by his blood, Heb. x. 17, &c.

(2.) Christ, by his obedience, has *purchased* this privilege, *viz.* that the prayers of those who believe in him should be heard, He has not only removed the obstacles to our prayers, but has merited a hearing of them. His merits are the incense that is offered with the prayers of the saints, which renders them a sweet savour to God, and acceptable in his sight. Hence the prayers of the saints have such power with God; hence at the prayer of a poor worm of the dust God stopped the sun in his course for about the space of a whole day; hence Jacob as a prince had power with God, and prevailed. Our prayers would be of no account, and of no avail with God, were it not for the merits of Christ.

(3.) Christ enforces the prayers of his people, by his *intercession* at the right hand of God in heaven. He hath entered for us into the holy of holies, with the incense which he hath provided, and there he makes continual intercession for all that come to God in his name; so that their prayers come to God the Father through his hands, if I may so say; which is represented in Rev. viii. 3, 4. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand."—This was typified of old by the priest's offering incense in the temple, at the time when the people were offering up their prayers to God; as Luke i. 10. "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense."

APPLICATION.

Hence we may learn how highly we are privileged, in that we have the Most High revealed to us, who is a God that heareth prayer. The greater part of mankind are destitute of this privilege. Whatever their necessities are, whatever their calamities or sorrows, they have no prayer-

hearing God to whom they may go. If they go to the gods whom they worship, and cry to them ever so earnestly, it will be in vain. They worship either lifeless things, that can neither help them, nor know that they need help; or wicked cruel spirits, who are their enemies, and wish nothing but their misery; and who, instead of helping them are from day to day working their ruin, and watching over them, as an hungry lion watches over his prey.

How are we distinguished from them, in that we have the true God made known to us; a God of infinite grace and mercy; a God full of compassion to the miserable, who is ready to pity us under all our troubles and sorrows, to hear our cries, and to give us all the relief which we need; a God who delights in mercy, and is rich unto all that call upon him! How highly privileged are we, in that we have the holy word of this same God, to direct us how to seek for mercy! And whatever difficulties or distress we are in, we may go to him with confidence and great encouragement. What a comfort may this be to us! and what reason have we to rejoice in our privileges, to prize them so highly, and to bless God that he hath been so merciful to us, as to give us his word, and reveal himself to us; and that he hath not left us to cry for help to stocks and stones, and devils, as he has left many thousands of others.

OBJECTION. I have often prayed to God for certain mercies, and he has not heard my prayers.—To this I answer,

1. It is no argument, that God is not a prayer-hearing God, if he give not to men *what they ask* of him, to consume upon their lusts. Oftentimes when men pray for temporal good things, they desire them for no good end, but only to gratify their pride or sensuality. If they pray for worldly good things chiefly from a worldly spirit; and make an idol of the world; it is no wonder that God doth not hear their prayers; Jam. iv. 3. "Ye ask, and receive not because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts." If you request him to give you something of which you will make an idol, and set up in opposition to him—or will use as weapons of warfare against him, or as instruments to serve his enemies—no wonder that God will not hear you. If God should hear such prayers, he would act as his own enemy inasmuch as he would bestow them to serve his enemies.

2. It is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing

God, that he heareth not *insincere* and *unbelieving* prayers. How can we expect that he should have any respect to that which has no sincerity in it? God looketh not at words but at the heart: and it is fit that he should do so. If men pray only in words, and not in heart, what are their prayers good for? and why should that God who searches the heart, and tries the reins, have any respect to them?—Sometimes men do nothing but dissemble in their prayers; and when they do so, it is no argument that God is the less a prayer-hearing God, that he doth not hear such prayers; for it is no argument of want of mercy. Sometimes they pray for that in words which they really desire not in their hearts; as that he would purge them from sin, when at the same time they show by their practice, that they do not desire to be purged from sin, while they love and chuse it, and are utterly averse to parting with it. In like manner, they often dissemble in the pretence and show, which they make in their prayers, of dependence on God for mercies, and of a sense of his sufficiency to supply them. In our coming to God, and praying to him for such and such things, there is a show that we are sensible we are dependent on him for them, and that he is sufficient to give them to us. But men sometimes seem to pray, while not sensible of their dependence on God, nor do they think him sufficient to supply them; for all the while they trust in themselves, and have no confidence in God.—They show in words as though they were beggars; but in heart they come as creditors, and look on God as their debtor. In words they seem to ask for things as the fruit of free grace; but in heart they account it would be hard, unjust, and cruel, if God should deny them. In words they seem humble and submissive, but in heart they are proud and contentious; there is no prayer but in their words.

It doth not render God at all the less a prayer-hearing God, that he distinguishes, as an all-seeing God, between real prayers and pretended ones. Such prayers as those which I have just now been mentioning, are not worthy of the name in the eyes of him who searches the heart, and sees things as they are.—That prayer which is not *of faith*, is insincere; for prayer is a show or manifestation of dependence on God, and trust in his sufficiency and mercy. Therefore, where this trust or *faith* is wanting, there is no prayer in the sight of God. And however God is sometimes pleased to grant the requests of those who have no *faith*,

yet he has not obliged himself so to do; nor is it an argument of his not being a prayer-hearing God, when he hears them not.

3. It is no argument that he is not a prayer-hearing God, that he exercises *his own wisdom* as to the time and manner of answering prayer. Some of God's people are sometimes ready to think, that he doth not hear their prayers, because he doth not answer them at the times when they expected; when indeed God doth hear them, and will answer them, in the time and way to which his own wisdom directs—The business of prayer is not to direct God, who is infinitely wise, and needs not any of our directions; who knows what is best for us ten thousand times better than we, and knows what time and what way are best. It is fit that he should answer prayer, and as an infinitely wise God, in the exercise of his own wisdom, and not ours. God will deal as a father with us, in answering our requests. But a child is not to expect that the father's wisdom be subject to his; nor ought he to desire it, but should esteem it a privilege, that the parent will provide for him according to his *own* wisdom.

As to particular temporal blessings for which we pray, it is no argument that he is not a prayer-hearing God, because he bestows them not upon us; for it may be that God sees the things for which we pray not to be best for us. If so, it would be no mercy in him to bestow them upon us, but a judgment. Such things, therefore, ought always to be asked with submission to the Divine will. God can answer prayer, though he bestow not the very thing for which we pray. He can sometimes better answer the lawful desires and good end we have in prayer another way. If our end be our own good and happiness, God can perhaps better answer that end in bestowing something else than in the bestowment of that very thing which we ask. And if the main good we aim at in our prayer be attained, our prayer is answered, though not in the bestowment of the individual thing which we sought. And so that may still be true which was before asserted, *that God always hears the prayer* OF FAITH. God never once failed of hearing a *sincere* and *believing* prayer; and those promises for ever hold good, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Another use of this doctrine may be, of reproof to those that neglect the duty of prayer. If we enjoy so great a pri-

vilege as to have the prayer-hearing God revealed to us, how great will be our folly and inexcusableness, if we neglect the privilege, or make no use of it, and deprive ourselves of the advantage by not seeking this God by prayer. They are hereby reproved who neglect the great duty of secret prayer, which is more expressly required in the word of God than any other kind. What account can those persons give of themselves, who neglect so known a duty? It is impossible that any among us should be ignorant of this command of God. How daring, therefore, is their wickedness who live in the neglect of this duty! and what can they answer to their Judge, when he shall call them to an account for it?

Here I shall briefly say something to an EXCUSE which some may be ready to make for themselves. Some may be ready to say, *If I do pray, my prayer will not be the prayer of faith, because I am in a natural condition, and have no faith.*

This excuses not from obedience to a plain command of God. The command is to all to whom the command shall come. God not only directs godly persons to pray, but others also. In the beginning of the second chapter of Proverbs, God directs all persons to cry after wisdom, and to lift up their voices for understanding, in order to their obtaining the fear and knowledge of God; and in Jam. i. 5. the apostle says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God;" and Peter directed *Simon Magus* to repent, and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him, Acts viii. 22. Therefore, when God says, do thus or thus, it is not for us to make excuses, but we must do the thing required. Besides,

God is pleased sometimes to answer the prayers of unbelievers. Indeed he hears not their prayers for their goodness or acceptableness, or because of any true respect to him manifested in them, for there is none; nor has he obliged himself to answer such prayers; yet he is pleased sometimes, of his sovereign mercy, to pity wicked men, and hear their cries. Thus he heard the cries of the Ninevites, (Jonah iii.) and the prayer of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27, 28. Though there be no regard to God in their prayers, yet he, of his infinite grace, is pleased to have respect to their desires of their own happiness, and to grant their requests. He may, and sometimes does, hear the cries of wicked men, as he hears the hungry ravens, when they cry, Psal. cxlvii. 9. and as he opens his bountiful hand, and satisfies the desires of every living thing, Psal. cxlv. 16. Besides the prayers of sinners, though they

have no goodness in them, yet are made a means of a preparation for mercy.

Finally, Seeing we have such a prayer-hearing God as we have heard, let us be much employed in the duty of prayer: let us pray with all prayer and supplication: let us live prayerful lives, continuing instant in prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance; praying always, without ceasing, earnestly, and not fainting.

SERMON V.

THE

NATURE AND END OF EXCOMMUNICATION.

1 COR. V. 11.

But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat.

THE apostle reproves the church at Corinth for not excommunicating an offending person; and directs them speedily to cast him out from among them; thus delivering him to Satan. He orders them to purge out such scandalous persons, as the Jews were wont to purge leaven out of their houses when they kept the passover. In the text and two foregoing verses he more particularly explains their duty with respect to such vicious persons, and enjoins it on them not to keep company with such. But then shows the difference they ought to observe in their carriage towards those who were vicious among the Heathen, who had never joined with the church, and towards those of the same vicious character who had been their professed brethren; see ver. 9—12. "I wrote unto you, not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is *called a brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat."

In the words of the text we may observe,

1. The *duty enjoined;* including the behaviour required, negatively expressed, *not to keep company;* and the manner or degree, *no not to eat.*

2. The *object;* a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. We are not to understand merely these particular vices, but also any other gross sins, or visible wickedness. It is evident, that the apostle here, and in the context, intends that we should exclude out of our company all those who are visibly wicked men. For in the foregoing verses he expresses his meaning by this, that we should purge out the old leaven: and, explaining what he means by leaven, he includes all visible wickedness; as in ver. 8. "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and *wickedness*, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Another thing by which the object of this behaviour or dealing is characterised, is, that he be one *that is called a brother*, or one that hath been a professed Christian, and a member of the church.

DOCTRINE. Those members of the visible Christian church who are become visibly wicked, ought not to be tolerated in the church, but should be excommunicated.

In handling this subject, I shall speak, (1.) Of the nature of excommunication; (2.) Of the subject; and, (3.) Of the ends of it.

I. I shall say something of the *nature* of excommunication. It is a punishment executed in the name and according to the will of Christ, whereby a person who hath heretofore enjoyed the privileges of a member of the visible church of Christ, is cast out of the church and delivered unto Satan. It is a punishment inflicted; it is expressly called a punishment by the apostle in 2 Cor. ii. 6. Speaking of the excommunicated Corinthian, he says, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment." For though it be not designed by man for the destruction of the person, but for his correction, and so is of the nature of a castigatory punishment, at least so far as it is inflicted by men; yet it is in itself a great and dreadful calamity, and the most severe punishment that Christ hath appointed in the visible church. Although in it the church is to seek only the good of the person and his recovery from sin

—there appearing, upon proper trial, no reason to hope for his recovery by gentler means—yet it is at God's sovereign disposal, whether it shall issue in his humiliation and repentance, or in his dreadful and eternal destruction; as it always doth issue in the one or the other.—In the definition of excommunication now given, two things are chiefly worthy of consideration; viz. Wherein this punishment *consists*, and by *whom* it is inflicted.

First, I would show wherein this punishment consists; and it is observable that there is in it something *privative*, and something *positive*.

First, There is something *privative* in excommunication, which consists in being deprived of a benefit heretofore enjoyed. This part of the punishment, in the Jewish church, was called *putting out of the synagogue*, John xvi. 2. The word *synagogue* is of the same signification as the word *church*. So this punishment in the Christian church is called *casting out of the church*. The Apostle John, blaming Diotrephes for inflicting this punishment without cause, says, 3 John v. 10. "He casteth them out of the church." It is sometimes expressed by the church's *withdrawing* from a member, 2 Thess. iii. 6. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw* yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

The privative part of excommunication consists in being *cut off* from the enjoyment of the privileges of God's visible people. The whole world of mankind is divided into these two sorts, those that are God's visible people; and those that are of the visible kingdom of Satan. Now it is a great privilege to be *within* the visible church of Christ. On the other hand, it is very doleful to be *without* this visible kingdom, to be cut off from its privileges, treated as belonging to the visible kingdom of Satan. For,

1. They are cut off from being the objects of that *charity* of God's people which is due to Christian brethren. They are not indeed cut off from all the charity of God's people, for all men ought to be the objects of their love. But I speak of the brotherly charity due to visible saints.—Charity, as the apostle represents it, is the bond by which the several members of the church of Christ are united together: and therefore he calls it the bond of perfectness; Col. iii. 14. "Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." But when a person is justly excommunicated, it is like a physician's cutting off a

diseased member from the body; and then the bond which before united it to the body is cut or broken.—A scandal is the same as a stumbling-block; and therefore while the scandal remains, it obstructs the charity of others: and if it finally remain after proper endeavours to remove it, then it breaks their charity, and so the offender is cut off from the charitable opinion and esteem of the church. It cannot any longer look upon him as a Christian, and so rejects him; therefore excommunication is called a rejection, Tit. iii. 10. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, *reject.*" This implies that the church disapproves the person as a Christian: it cannot any longer charitably look upon him as a saint, or fellow-worshipper of God, and can do no other than, on the contrary, esteem him an enemy of God; and so doth openly withdraw its charity from him, ceasing to acknowledge him as a fellow Christian, any more than the Heathens. He is also cut off from that honour which is due to brethren and fellow-Christians. To be a visible Christian is an honourable character; but excommunicated persons forfeit this honour. Christians ought not to pay that honour and respect to them which they pay to others; but should treat them as unworthy of such honour, that they may be ashamed. Christ tells us, they should "be unto us as heathen men and publicans," (Matt. xviii. 17.) which implies a withdrawing from them that common respect which we pay to others. We ought to treat them so as to let them plainly see that we do not count them worthy of it, to put them to shame.

Much love and complacency is due to those whom we are obliged in charity to receive as saints, because they are visible Christians. But this complacency excommunicated persons forfeit. We should still wish well to them, and seek their good. Excommunication itself is to be performed as an act of benevolence. We should seek their good by it; and it is to be used as a mean of their eternal salvation. But complacency and delight in them as visible Christians is to be withdrawn; and on the contrary they are to be the objects of displacency, as visibly and apparently wicked. We are to cast them out as an unclean thing which defiles the church of God. —In this sense the Psalmist professes a hatred of those who were the visible enemies of God. Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred." Not that he hated them with an hatred

of malice or ill-will, but with displacency and abhorrence of their wickedness. In this respect we ought to be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who, though he loves many wicked men with a love of benevolence, yet cannot love them with a love of complacency. Thus excommunicated persons are cut off from the charity of the church.

2. They are cut off also from the *society* which Christians have together as brethren. Thus we are commanded to *withdraw* from such; 2 Thess. iii. 6. To *avoid* them; Rom. xvi. 17 To *have no company* with them; 2 Thess. iii. 14. And to *treat them as heathens and publicans*; Matt. xviii. 17. The people of God are, as much as may be, to withdraw from them as to that common society which is proper to subsist among Christians.—Not that they should avoid speaking to them on any occasion. All manner and all degrees of society are not forbidden; but all unnecessary society, or such as is wont to be among those who delight in the company of each other. We should not associate ourselves with them so as to make them our companions. Yea there ought to be such an avoiding of their company as may show great dislike.

Particularly, we are forbidden such a degree of associating ourselves with them, as there is in making them *our guests* at our tables, or in being *their guests* at their tables; as is manifest in the text, where we are commanded to have no company with them, *no not to eat*. That this respects not eating with them at the Lord's supper, but a common eating, is evident by the words, that the eating here forbidden, is one of the *lowest degrees* of keeping company, which are forbidden. Keep no company with such an one, saith the apostle, *no not to eat:* As much as to say, no not in so low a degree as to eat with him. But eating with him at the Lord's supper, is the very highest degree of visible Christian communion. Who can suppose that the apostle meant this, Take heed and have no company with a man, no not so much as in the highest degree of communion that you can have? Besides, the apostle mentions this eating as a way of keeping company which, however, they *might* hold with the Heathen. He tells them, not to keep company with fornicators; then he informs them, he means not with the fornicators of this world, that is, the Heathens; but, saith he, "if any man that is called a *brother* be a fornicator, &c." with such an one keep no company, *no not to eat.*" This makes it most apparent, that the apostle doth not mean eating at the Lord's table; for so, they might not keep company with the Heathens, any more than with

an excommunicated person. Here naturally arise two questions.

QUEST. I. How far are the church to treat excommunicated persons as they would those who never have been of the visible church? I answer, they are to treat them as Heathens, excepting in these two things, in which there is a difference to be observed.

1. They are to have a greater concern for their welfare still, than if they never had been brethren, and therefore ought to take more pains, by admonitions and otherwise, to reclaim and save them, than they are obliged to take towards those who have been always Heathens. This seems manifest by that of the Apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15. "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The consideration that he hath been a brother heretofore, and that we have not to finally cast him off from that relation, but that we are still hoping and using means for his recovery, obliges us to concern ourselves more for the good of his soul than for those with whom we never had any such connection; and so to pray for him, and to take pains by admonishing him.—The very reason of the thing shows the same. For this very ordinance of excommunication is used for this end, that we may thereby obtain the good of the person excomunicated. And surely we should be more concerned for the good of those who have been our brethren, and who are now under the operation of means used by us for their good, than for those with whom we never had any special connection. Thus, there should be more of the love of benevolence exercised towards persons excommunicated, than towards those who never were members of the church.—But then,

2. On the other hand, as to what relates to the love of complacence, they ought to be treated with greater displacency, and disrespect than the Heathen. This is plain by the text and context. For the Apostle plainly doth not require of us to avoid the company of the Heathen, or the fornicators of the world, but expressly requires us to avoid the company of any brother who shall be guilty of any of the vices pointed out in the text, or any other like them. —This is also plain by the reason of the thing. For those who have once been visible Christians and have apostatized and cast off that visibility, deserve to be treated with more ab-

horrence than those who have never made any pretensions to Christianity. The sin of such, in apostatizing from their profession, is more aggravated, than the sin of those who never made any profession. They far more dishonour religion, and are much more abhorred of God. Therefore when Christ says, Matth. xviii. 17. "Let him be unto thee as an Heathen man and a publican," it is not meant that we should treat an excommunicated brother as Christians ought to treat Heathens and publicans; for they might eat with them, as Christ himself did; and the Apostle gives leave to eat with such. 1 Cor. x. 27. and in the context gives leave to keep company with such; yet forbids to eat with an excommunicated person.—Christ's meaning must be, that we should treat an excommunicated person, as the Jews were wont to treat the Heathens and publicans; and as the disciples had been always taught among the Jews, and brought up, and used to treat them. They would by no means eat with publicans and sinners; they would not eat with the Gentiles, or with the Samaritans. Therefore Peter durst not eat with the Gentiles when the Jews were present; Gal. ii. 12.

QUEST. II. What kindness and respect may and ought to be shown to such persons?--I answer, There are some things by which the members of the church are obliged to show kindness to them; and these things are chiefly, to pray for them, and to admonish them.—And the common duties and offices of humanity ought to be performed towards them; such as relieving them when they are sick, or under any other distress; allowing them those benefits of human society, and that help, which are needful for the support and defence of their lives and property.—The duties of natural and civil relations are still to be performed towards them. Excommunication doth not release children from the obligation of duty to their parents, nor parents from parental affection and care toward their children. Nor are husbands and wives released from the duties proper to their relation. And so of all other less relations, whether natural, domestic, or civil.

3. They are cut off from the *fellowship* of the Christian church. The true notion of the *visible church* of Christ, is that part of mankind, which, as his people, is united in upholding his appointed worship. And the notion of a *particular* visible church of Christ, is a particular society of worshippers, or of visible saints, united for the social worship of God according to his institutions or ordinances. One great and

main privilege then, which the members of such a church enjoy, is fellowship in the worship which God hath appointed in his church. But they that are excommunicated are cut off from this privilege, they have no fellowship, no communion with the people of God in any part of their worship.

He who is the mouth of the worshipping congregation in offering up public prayers, is the mouth only of the worshipping society; but the excommunicated are cast out of that society. The church may and ought to pray *for* such; but they cannot have *fellowship* with such in prayer. The minister, when speaking in prayer, doth not speak in *their* name; he speaks only in the name of the *united society* of visible saints or worshippers. If the people of God were to put up prayers in their name, it would imply a receiving of them into charity, or that they charitably looked upon them as the servants or worshippers of God. But, as was observed before, excommunicated persons are in this respect cast out of the charity of the church, and it looks upon them as wicked men and enemies of God, and treats them as such.

So when a congregation of visible saints join in singing the praises of God, as the Psalmist says, Psal. xxxiv. 3. "Let us extol his name together;" they do it only as joining with those who are in their charitable estimation, fellow-servants and fellow-worshippers of God. They do it not as joining with Heathens; nor do the people of God say to the open enemies of God, remaining such, "Come let us extol his name together;" but they say it to their brethren in God's service. If we ought not to *join* with excommunicated persons in familiar society, much less ought we to hold *fellowship* with them in solemn worship, though they may be present.

4. There are privileges of a more *internal* nature, which those who are members of the visible church enjoy, from which excommunicated persons are cut off. They being God's covenant-people, are in the way of covenant-blessings: and therefore have more encouragement to come to God by prayer for any mercy they need. The visible church is the people among whom God hath set his tabernacle, and among whom he is wont to bestow his blessings. But the excommunicated are, in a sense, cast out of God's sight, into a land of banishment, as Cain was, though not debarred from common means. Gen. iv. 14, 16. They are not in the way of those smiles of providence, those tokens of God's

favour, and that light of God's countenance, like those who are within. Nor, as they are cast out from among God's covenant people, have they the divine covenant to plead, as the members of the church have.—Thus far I have considered the *privative* part of the punishment of excommunication.—I now proceed,

SECONDLY, to the *positive* part, which is expressed by being delivered to Satan, in verse 5. By which two things seem to be signified,

1. A being delivered over to the *calamities* to which they are subject, who belong to the visible kingdom of the devil. As they who are excommunicated are thrust out from among the visible people of God; so they are to be looked upon, in most respects at least, as being in the miserable, deplorable circumstances in which those are who are under the visible tyranny of the devil, as the Heathens are. And in many respects they doubtless suffer the cruel tyranny of the devil, in a manner agreeable to their condition, being cast out into his visible kingdom.

2. It is reasonable to suppose that God is wont to make the devil the *instrument* of those peculiar, severe chastisements which their apostacy deserves. As they deserve more severe chastisement than the Heathens, and are delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh; so we may well suppose, either that God is wont to let Satan loose, sorely to molest them outwardly or inwardly, and by such severe means to destroy the flesh, and to humble them: or that he suffers the devil to take possession of them dreadfully to harden them, and so to destroy them for ever. For although what men are to aim at, is only the destruction of the flesh, yet whether it shall prove the destruction of the flesh, or the eternal and more dreadful destruction of themselves is at God's sovereign disposal.——So much for the nature of excommunication.

SECONDLY, I come to show by whom this punishment is to be inflicted.

1. When it is regularly and duly inflicted, it is to be looked upon as done by *Christ himself*. That is imported in the definition, that it is *according to his will*, and to the directions of his word. And therefore he is to be looked upon as *principal* in it, and we ought to esteem it as really and truly from him, as if he were on earth personally inflicting it.

2. As it is inflicted by men, it is only done *ministerially*. They do not act of themselves in this, any more than in preaching the word. When the word is preached, it is the word of Christ which is spoken, as the preacher speaks in the name of Christ, as his ambassador. So when a church excommunicates a member, the church acts in the name of Christ, and by his authority, not by its own. It is governed by his will, not by its own. Indeed it is only a particular application of the word of Christ.—Therefore it is promised, that when it is duly done, it shall be confirmed in heaven; i. e. Christ will confirm it, by acknowledging it to be his own act; and he will, in his future providence, have regard to what is done thus as done by himself: he will look on the person, and treat him as cast out and delivered to Satan by himself; and if he repent not, will for ever reject him: Matth xviii. 18. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." John xx. 23. "Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."——I shall now as was proposed,

II. Endeavour to show who are the proper *subjects* of excommunication. They are those members of the church who are now become visibly wicked; for the very name and nature of the visible church show, that it is a society of visible saints, or visibly holy persons. When any of these visible saints become visibly wicked men, they ought to be cast out of the church. Now, the members of the church become visibly wicked by these two things:

1. By *gross sin*. Saints may be guilty of other sins, and very often are, without throwing any just stumbling block in the way of public charity, or of the charity of their Christian brethren. The common failures of humanity, and the daily short-comings of the best of men, do not ordinarily obstruct the charity of their brethren; but when they fall into any gross sin, this effect follows; for we naturally argue, that he who hath committed some gross sin hath doubtless much more practised less and more secret sins; and so we doubt concerning the soundness and sincerity of his heart. Therefore all those who commit any gross sin, as they obstruct the charity of their brethren, are proper subjects of discipline: and unless they confess their sin, and manifest their repentance, are proper subjects of excommunication.—This leads me to say,

2. That the members of the church do especially become

visibly wicked, when they remain *impenitent* in their sins, after proper means used to reclaim them. Merely being guilty of any gross sin, is a stumbling-block to charity, unless repentance immediately succeed; but especially when the guilty person remains obstinate and contumacious; in such a case he is most clearly a visibly wicked person, and therefore to be dealt with as such; to be cast out into the wicked world, the kingdom of Satan, where he appears to belong.—Nor is contumacy in *gross* sins only, a sufficient ground of excommunication. In the text the apostle commands us to inflict this censure, not only on those who are guilty of the gross sins of fornication, idolatry, and drunkenness, but also on those who are guilty of covetousness, railing, and extortion, which, at least in some degrees of them are too generally esteemed no very heinous crimes. And in Rom. xvi. 17. the same apostle commands the church to excommunicate "them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine they had learned;" and in 2 Thess. iii. 14. to excommunicate every one who should "not obey his word by that epistle." Now, according to these precepts, every one who doth not observe the doctrine of the apostles, and their word contained in their epistles, and so, by parity of reason, the divine instructions contained in the other parts of scripture, is to be excommunicated, provided he continue impenitent and contumacious. So that *contumacy* and *impenitence* in any real and manifest sin whatsoever, deserve excommunication.

III. I come to speak of the *ends* of this ecclesiastical censure. The special ends of it are these three.

1. That the church may be kept *pure*, and the ordinances of God not to be defiled. This end is mentioned in the context, verse 6, &c. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—When the ordinances of God are defiled by the toleration of wicked men in the church, God the Father, Jesus Christ, the head and founder of the church, the religion of the gospel, and the church itself, are dishonoured and exposed to contempt. —And that the other members themselves may not be defiled, it is necessary that they bear a testimony against sin,

by censuring it whenever it appears among them, especially in the grosser acts of wickedness. If they neglect so to do, they contract guilt by the very neglect; and not only so, but they expose themselves to learn the same vices which they tolerate in others; for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Hence that earnest caution of the apostle, Heb. xii. 15. "looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and *thereby many be defiled.*"

2. That others may be *deterred* from wickedness. As the neglect of proper censure, with respect to visibly wicked church-members, tends to lead and encourage others to commit the same wickedness; so the infliction of proper censure tends to restrain others, not only from the same wickedness, but from sin in general. This therefore is repeatedly mentioned as one end of the punishments appointed to be inflicted by the law of Moses: Deut. xiii. 11. "And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more such wickedness as this is among you."

3. That the persons themselves may be *reclaimed*, and that their souls may be saved. When other more gentle means have been used in vain, then it is the duty of the church to use this, which is more severe, in order to bring them to conviction, shame, and humiliation: and that, by being rejected and avoided by the church, and treated with disrespect, they may be convinced how they deserve to be for ever disowned of God; that by being delivered unto Satan, they may learn how they deserve for ever to be delivered up to him; that by his being made the instrument of their chastisement, they may learn how they deserve to be tormented by him, without any rest day or night, for ever and ever.—This, with the counsels and admonitions by which it is to be followed, is the last mean that the church is to use, in order to reclaim those members which are become visibly wicked. If this be ineffectual, what is next to be expected is destruction without remedy.

APPLICATION.

I shall apply this subject in a brief use of exhortation to this church, to maintain strictly the proper discipline of the gospel in general, and particularly that part of it which consists in excommunication. To this end I shall just suggest to you the following motives.

1. That if you tolerate visible wickedness in your members, you will greatly *dishonour* God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the religion which you profess, the church in general, and yourselves in particular. As those members of the church who practise wickedness, bringing dishonour upon the whole body, so do those who tolerate them in it. The language of it is, that God doth not require holiness in his servants; that Christ doth not require it in his disciples; that the religion of the gospel is not an holy religion; that the church is not a body of holy servants of God; and that this church, in particular, hath no regard to holiness or true virtue.

2. Your *own good* loudly calls you to the same thing. From what hath been already said, you see how liable you, as individuals, will be to catch the contagion, which is easily communicated by reason of the natural depravity, in a degree at least, remaining in the best of men.—Beside, if strict discipline be maintained among you, it will not only tend to prevent the spread of wickedness, but to make you more fruitful in holiness. If you know that the eyes of your brethren observe all your conduct, it will not only make you more guarded against sin, but more careful "to maintain good works," and to abound in "the fruits of the spirit." Thus you will have more abundant joy and peace in believing.

3. The good of those who are *without* should be another motive. What the apostle saith with reference to another subject, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. is perfectly applicable to the case before us: "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." If strict discipline, and thereby strict morals, were maintained in the church, it would in all probability be one of the most powerful means of conviction and conversion towards those who are without.

4. *Benevolence* towards your offending brethren themselves, calls upon you to maintain discipline in all its parts. Surely, if we love our brethren, it will grieve us to see them wandering from the path of truth and duty; and in proportion as our compassion is moved, shall we be disposed to use all proper means to reclaim and bring them back to the right way. Now, the rules of discipline contained in the gospel are the most proper, and best adapted to this end, that infinite wisdom itself could devise. Even excommunication is instituted for this very end, *the destruction of the flesh*, and *the salvation of*

the spirit. If, therefore, we have any love of benevolence to our offending and erring brethren, it becomes us to manifest it, in executing strictly the rules of gospel-discipline, and even excommunication itself, whenever it is necessary.

5. But the absolute *authority of Christ* ought to be sufficient in this case, if there were no other motive. Our text is only one of many passages in the scripture, wherein strict discipline is expressly commanded, and peremptorily enjoined. Now, how can you be the true disciples of Christ, if you live in the neglect of these plain positive commands? "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments;" and, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." But, "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If you strictly follow the rules of discipline instituted by Christ, you have reason to hope for his blessing; for he is wont to bless his own institutions, and to smile upon the means of grace which he hath appointed.

SERMON VI*.

WHEN THE WICKED SHALL HAVE FILLED UP THE MEASURE OF THEIR SIN, *WRATH WILL COME UPON THEM TO THE UTTTERMOST.*

1 THESS. ii. 16.

To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

IN verse 14, the Apostle commends the Christian Thessalonians that they became the followers of the churches of God in Judea, both in faith and in sufferings; in *faith*, in that they received the word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God; in *sufferings*, in that they had suffered like things of their own countrymen, as *they* had of the Jews. Upon which the apostle sets forth the persecuting, cruel, and perverse wickedness of that people, "who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have," says he, "persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." Then come in the words of the text; "To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

In these words we may observe two things:

1. To what effect was the heinous wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews, viz. *to fill up their sins.* God hath set

* Dated May 1735.

bounds to every man's wickedness; he suffers men to live, and to go on in sin, till they have filled up their measure, and then cuts them off. To this effect was the wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews: they were exceedingly wicked, and thereby filled up the measure of their sins a great pace. And the reason why they were permitted to be so obstinate under the preaching and miracles of Christ, and of the apostles, and under all the means used with them, was, that they might fill up the measure of their sins. This is agreeable to what Christ said, Matt. xxiii. 31, 32. "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

2. The punishment of their wickedness: "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." There is a connection between the measure of men's sin, and the measure of punishment. When they have filled up the measure of their sin, then is filled up the measure of God's wrath.

The degree of their punishment, is the *uttermost* degree. This may respect both a national and personal punishment. If we take it as a *national* punishment, a little after the time when the epistle was written, wrath came upon the nation of the Jews to the uttermost, in their terrible destruction by the Romans; when, as Christ said, "was great tribulation, such as never was since the beginning of the world to that time," Matt. xxiv. 21. That nation had before suffered many of the fruits of divine wrath for their sins; but this was beyond all, this was their highest degree of punishment as a nation. If we take it as a *personal* punishment, then it respects their punishment in hell. God often punishes men very dreadfully in this world; but in hell "wrath comes on them to the *uttermost*."—By this expression is also denoted the *certainty* of this punishment. For though the punishment was then future, yet it is spoken of as present: "The wrath *is* come upon them to the uttermost." It was as certain as if it had already taken place. God, who knows all things, speaks of things that are not as though they were; for things present and things future are equally certain with him. It also denotes the *near approach* of it. *The wrath* IS *come;* i. e. it is just at hand; it is at the door; as it proved with respect to that nation; their terrible destruction by the Romans was soon after the Apostle wrote this epistle.

DOCTRINE. When those that continue in sin shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.

I. Prop. There is a *certain measure* that God hath set to the sin of every wicked man. God says concerning the sin of man, as he says to the raging waves of the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further. The measure of some is much greater than of others. Some reprobates commit but a little sin in comparison with others, and so are to endure proportionably a smaller punishment. There are many vessels of wrath; but some are smaller, and others greater vessels; some will contain comparatively but little wrath, others a greater measure of it. Sometimes, when we see men go to dreadful lengths, and become very heinously wicked, we are ready to wonder that God lets them alone. He sees them go on in such audacious wickedness, and keeps silence, nor does any thing to interrupt them, but they go smoothly on, and meet with no hurt. But sometimes the reason why God lets them alone is, because they have not filled up the measure of their sins. When they live in dreadful wickedness, they are but filling up the measure which God hath *limited* for them. This is sometimes the reason why God suffers very wicked men to live so long; because their iniquity is not full: Gen. xv. 16. "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." For this reason also God sometimes suffers them to live in prosperity. Their prosperity is a snare to them, and an occasion of their sinning a great deal more. Wherefore God suffers them to have such a snare, because he suffers them to fill up a larger measure. So, for this cause, he sometimes suffers them to live under great light, and great means and advantages, at the same time to neglect and misimprove all. Every one shall live till he hath filled up his measure.

II. Prop. While men continue in sin, they are filling the measure set them. This is the work in which they spend their whole lives; they begin in their childhood; and if they live to grow old in sin, they still go on with this work. It is the work with which every day is filled up. They may alter their business in other respects; they may sometimes be about one thing, and sometimes about another; but they never change from this work of filling up the measure of their sins. Whatever they put their hands to, they are still employed in this work. This is the first thing that they set themselves about when they awake in the morning, and the last thing they do at night. They are all the while treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is a gross mistake of some natural men, who think that when

they read and pray they do not add to their sins; but, on the contrary, think they diminish their guilt by these exercises. They think, that instead of adding to their sins, they do something to satisfy for their past offences; but instead of that, they do but add to the measure by their best prayers, and by those services with which they themselves are most pleased.

III. Prop. When once the measure of their sins is filled up, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost. God will then wait no longer upon them. Wicked men think that God is altogether such an one as themselves, because, when they commit such wickedness, he keeps silence. "Because judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil." But when once they shall have filled up the measure of their sins, judgment will be executed; God will not bear with them any longer. Now is the day of grace, and the day of patience, which they spend in filling up their sins; but when their sins shall be full, then will come the day of wrath, the day of the fierce anger of God.—God often executes his wrath on ungodly men, in a less degree, in this world. He sometimes brings afflictions upon them, and that in wrath. Sometimes he expresses his wrath in very sore judgments; sometimes he appears in a terrible manner, not only outwardly, but also in the inward expressions of it on their consciences. Some, before they died, have had the wrath of God inflicted on their souls in degrees that have been intolerable. But these things are only forerunners of their punishment, only slight foretastes of wrath. God never stirs up all his wrath against wicked men while in this world; but when once wicked men shall have filled up the measure of their sins, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost; and that in the following respects:

1. Wrath will come upon them without any *restraint* or moderation in the degree of it. God doth always lay, as it were, a restraint upon himself; he doth not stir up his wrath; he stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind; he lets not his arm light down on wicked men with its full weight. But when sinners shall have filled up the measure of their sins, there will be no caution, no restraint. His rough wind will not be stayed nor moderated. The wrath of God will be poured out like fire. He will come forth, not only in anger, but in the fierceness of his anger; he will execute wrath with power, so as to show what his wrath is, and make his power known.

There will be nothing to alleviate his wrath; his heavy wrath will lie on them, without any thing to lighten the burden, or to keep off, in any measure, the full weight of it from pressing the soul.—His eye will not spare, neither will he regard the sinner's cries and lamentations, however loud and bitter. Then shall wicked men know that God is the Lord; they shall know how great that majesty is which they have despised, and how dreadful that threatened wrath is which they have so little regarded. Then shall come on wicked men that punishment which they deserve. God will exact of them the uttermost farthing. Their iniquities are marked before him; they are all written in his book; and in the future world he will reckon with them, and they must pay all the debt. Their sins are laid up in store with God; they are sealed up among his treasures; and them he will recompense, even recompense into their bosoms. The consummate degree of punishment will not be executed till the day of judgment; but the wicked are sealed over to this consummate punishment immediately after death; they are cast into hell, and there bound in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day; and they know that the highest degree of punishment is coming upon them. Final wrath will be executed without any mixture; all mercy, all enjoyments will be taken away. God sometimes expresses his wrath in this world; but here good things and evil are mixed together; in the future there will be only evil things.

2. Wrath will then be executed without any *merciful* circumstances. The judgments which God executes on ungodly men in this world, are attended with many merciful circumstances. There is much patience and long-suffering, together with judgment; judgments are joined with continuance of opportunity to seek mercy. But in hell there will be no more exercises of divine patience. The judgments which God exercises on ungodly men in this world are warnings to them to avoid greater punishments; but the wrath which will come upon them, when they shall have filled up the measure of their sin, will not be of the nature of warnings. Indeed they will be effectually awakened, and made thorougly sensible, by what they shall suffer; yet their being awakened and made sensible will do them no good. Many a wicked man hath suffered very awful things from God in this world, which have been a means of saving good; but that wrath which sinners shall suffer after death will be no way for their good. God will have no merciful design in it; neither will it be possible that they should get any good by that or by any thing else.

3. Wrath will be so executed, as to perfect the work to which wrath tends, viz. *utterly to undo* the subject of it. Wrath is often so executed in this life, as greatly to distress persons, and bring them into great calamity; yet not so as to complete the ruin of those who suffer it; but in another world, it will be so executed, as to finish their destruction, and render them utterly and perfectly undone: it will take away all comfort, all hope, and all support. The soul will be, as it were, utterly crushed; the wrath will be wholly intolerable. It must sink, and will utterly sink, and will have no more strength to keep itself from sinking, than a worm would have to keep itself from being crushed under the weight of a mountain. The wrath will be so great, so mighty and powerful, as wholly to abolish all manner of welfare: Matt. xxi 44. "But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

4. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, that wrath will come upon them which is *eternal*. Though men may suffer very terrible and awful judgments in this world, yet those judgments have an end. They may be long continued, yet they commonly admit of relief. Temporal distresses and sorrows have intermissions and respite, and commonly by degrees abate and wear off; but the wrath that shall be executed, when the measure of sin shall have been filled up, will have no end. Thus it will be to the uttermost as to its duration; it will be of so long continuance, that it will be impossible it should be longer. Nothing can be longer than eternity.

5. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost of what is *threatened*. Sin is an infinite evil; and the punishment which God hath threatened against it is very dreadful. The threatenings of God against the workers of iniquity are very awful; but these threatenings are never fully accomplished in this world. However dreadful things some men may suffer in this life, yet God never fully executes his threatenings for so much as one sin, till they have filled up the whole measure. The threatenings of the law are never answered by any thing that any man suffers here. The most awful judgment in this life doth not answer God's threatenings, either in degree, or in circumstances, or in duration. If the greatest sufferings that ever are endured in this life should be eternal, it would not answer the threatening. Indeed temporal judgments *belong* to the threatenings of the law; but these are not *answered* by them; they are but foretastes of the punishment.

"The wages of sin is death." No expressions of wrath that are suffered before men have filled up the measure of their their sin, are its full wages. But *then*, God will reckon with them, and will recompense into their bosoms the full deserved sum.

APPLICATION.

The use I would make of this doctrine is, of warning to natural men, to rest no longer in sin, and to make haste to flee from it. The things which have been said, under this doctrine, may well be awakening, awful considerations to you. It is awful to consider whose wrath it is that abides upon you, and of what wrath you are in danger. It is impossible to express the misery of a natural condition. It is like being in Sodom, with a dreadful storm of fire and brimstone hanging over it, just ready to break forth, and to be poured down upon it. The clouds of divine vengeance are full, and just ready to burst. Here let those who yet continue in sin, in this town, consider particularly,

1. Under what *great means* and advantages you continue in sin. God is now favouring us with very great and extraordinary means and advantages, in that we have such extraordinary tokens of the presence of God among us; his Spirit is so remarkably poured out, and multitudes of all ages, and all sorts, are converted and brought home to Christ. God appears among us in the most extraordinary manner, perhaps, that ever he did in New England. The children of Israel saw many mighty works of God, when he brought them out of Egypt; but we at this day see works more mighty, and of a more glorious nature.

We who live under such light, have had loud calls; but now above all. Now is a day of salvation. The fountain hath been set open among us in an extraordinary manner, and hath stood open for a considerable time: Yet you continue in sin, and the calls that you have hitherto had have not brought you to be washed in it. What extraordinary advantages have you lately enjoyed, to stir you up! How hath every thing in the town, of late, been of that tendency! Those things which used to be the greatest hindrances have been removed. You have not the ill examples of immoral persons to be a temptation to you. There is not now that vain worldly talk, and ill company, to divert you, and to be a hindrance to you, which there used to be. Now you have multitudes of good examples set before you; there are many now all around you, who,

instead of diverting and hindering you, are earnestly desirous of your salvation, and willing to do all that they can to move you to flee to Christ: they have a thirsting desire for it. The chief talk in the town has of late been about the things of religion, and has been such as hath tended to promote, and not to hinder, your souls' good. Every thing all around you hath tended to stir you up; and will you yet continue in sin?

Some of you have continued in sin till you are far advanced in life. You were warned when you were children; and some of you had awakenings then; however, the time went away. You became men and women; and then you were stirred up again, you had the strivings of God's Spirit; and some of you have fixed the times when you would make thorough work of seeking salvation. Some of you perhaps determined to do it when you should be married and settled in the world; others when you should have finished such a business, and when your circumstances should be so and so altered. Now these times have come, and are past; yet you continue in sin.

Many of you have had remarkable warnings of Providence. Some of you have been warned by the deaths of near *relations;* you have stood by, and seen others die and go into eternity; yet this hath not been effectual. Some of you have been near death *yourselves*, have been brought nigh the grave in sore sickness, and were full of your promises how you would behave yourselves, if it should please God to spare your lives. Some of you have very narrowly escaped death by dangerous accidents; but God was pleased to spare you, to give you a further space to repent; yet you continue in sin.

Some of you have seen times of remarkable outpourings of the Spirit of God, in this town, in times past; but it had no good effect on you. *You* had the strivings of the Spirit of God too, as well as others. God did not so pass by your door, but that he came and knocked; yet you stood it out. Now God hath come again in a more remarkable manner than ever before, and hath been pouring out his Spirit for some months, in its most gracious influence; yet you remain in sin until now. In the beginning of this awakening, you were warned to flee from wrath, and to forsake your sins. You were told what a wide door there was open, what an accepted time it was, and were urged to press into the kingdom of God. And many did press in; they forsook their sins, and believed in Christ; *but you, when you had seen it, repented not, that you might believe him.*

Then you were warned again, and still others have been pressing and thronging into the kingdom of God. Many have fled for refuge, and have laid hold on Christ; yet you continue in sin and unbelief. You have seen multitudes of all sorts, of all ages, young and old, flocking to Christ, and many of about your age and your circumstances; but you still are in the same miserable condition in which you used to be. You have seen persons daily flocking to Christ, as doves to their windows. God hath not only poured out his Spirit on this town, but also on other towns around us, and they are flocking in there, as well as here. This blessing spreads further and further; many, far and near, seem to be setting their faces Zion-ward: yet you who live here, where this work first began, continue behind still; you have no lot nor portion in this matter.

2. How *dreadful* the wrath of God is, when it is executed to the uttermost. To make you in some measure sensible of that, I desire you to consider whose wrath it is. The wrath of a king is the roaring of a lion; but this is the wrath of Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent. Let us consider, what can we rationally think of it? How dreadful must be the wrath of such a Being, when it comes upon a person to the uttermost, without any pity, or moderation, or merciful circumstances! What must be the uttermost of his wrath, who made heaven and earth by the word of his power; who spake, and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast! What must his wrath be, who commandeth the sun, and it rises not, and sealeth up the stars! What must his wrath be, who shaketh the earth out of his place, and causeth the pillars of heaven to tremble! What must his wrath be, who rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, who removeth the mountains out of their places, and overturneth them in his anger! What must his wrath be, whose majesty is so awful, that no man could live in the sight of it! What must the wrath of such a Being be, when it comes to the uttermost, when he makes his majesty appear and shine bright in the misery of wicked men! And what is a worm of the dust before the fury and under the weight of this wrath, which the stoutest devils cannot bear, but utterly sink, and are crushed under it.—Consider how dreadful the wrath of God is sometimes in this world, only in a little taste or view of it. Sometimes, when God only enlightens conscience, to have some sense of his wrath, it causes the stout-hearted to cry out; nature is ready to sink under it, when indeed it is but a little glimpse of divine wrath that is seen. This hath been observed in many cases. But if a slight taste and apprehension of wrath

be so dreadful and intolerable, what must it be, when it comes upon persons to the uttermost! When a few drops or little sprinkling of wrath is so distressing and overbearing to the soul, how must it be when God opens the flood-gates, and lets the mighty deluge of his wrath come pouring down upon men's guilty heads, and brings in all his waves and billows upon their souls! How little of God's wrath will sink them! Psal. ii. 12. "When his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

3. Consider, you know not what wrath God may be about to execute upon wicked men in *this world.* Wrath may, in some sense, be coming upon them, in the present life, to the uttermost, for ought we know. When it is said of the Jews, "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," respect is had, not only to the execution of divine wrath on that people in hell, but that terrible destruction of Judea and Jerusalem, which was then near approaching, by the Romans. We know not but the wrath is now coming, in some peculiarly awful manner, on the wicked world. God seems, by the things which he is doing among us, to be coming forth for some great thing. The work which hath been lately wrought among us is no ordinary thing. He doth not work in his usual way, but in a way very extraordinary; and it is probable, that it is a forerunner of some very great revolution. We must not pretend to say what is in the womb of providence, or what is in the book of God's secret decrees; yet we may and ought to discern the signs of these times.

Though God be now about to do glorious things for his church and people, yet it is probable that they will be accompanied with dreadful things to his enemies. It is the manner of God, when he brings about any glorious revolution for his people, at the same time to execute very awful judgments on his enemies: Deut. xxxii. 43. "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people." Isa. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isa. lxv. 13, 14. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but

ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." We find in scripture, that where glorious times are prophesied to God's people, there are at the same time awful judgments foretold to his enemies. What God is now about to do, we know not: but this we may know, that there will be no safety to any but those who are in the ark.—Therefore it behoves all to haste and flee for their lives, to get into a safe condition, to get into Christ; then they need not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: For God will be their refuge and strength; they need not be afraid of evil tidings; their hearts may be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

SERMON VII*.

WICKED MEN USEFUL IN THEIR DESTRUCTION ONLY.

EZEK. XV. 2, 3, 4.

Son of man, What is the vine-tree more than any tree? or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burnt: is it meet for any work?

THE visible church of God is here compared to the vine-tree, as is evident by God's own explanation of the allegory, in ver. 6, 7, and 8. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem," &c. And it may be understood of mankind in general. So Deut. xxxii. "Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall." And especially his professing people, Psal. lxxx. 8. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt;" ver. 14. "Look down from heaven, behold, and visit this vine." And Cant. ii. 15. "The foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." Isa. v. "My beloved hath a vineyard, and he planted it with the choicest vine." "Jer. ii. 21. "I had planted thee a noble vine." Hos. x. 1. "Israel is an empty vine." So in chap. 15. of John, visible Christians are compared to the *branches of a vine.*

Man is very fitly represented by the vine. The weakness and dependence of the vine on other things which support it, well represents to us what a poor, feeble, dependent crea-

* Dated July 1744.

ture man is, and how, if left to himself, he falls into mischief, and cannot help himself. The visible people of God are fitly compared to a vine, because of the care and cultivation of the husbandman, or vine-dresser. The business of husbandmen in the land of Israel was very much about vines; and the care they exercised to fence them, to defend them, to prune them, to prop them up, and to cultivate them, well represented that merciful care which God exercises towards his visible people.

In the words now read is represented, how wholly useless and unprofitable, even beyond other trees, a vine is, in case of unfruitfulness: "What is a vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?" i. e. if it do not bear fruit. Men make much more of a vine than of other trees; they take great care of it, to wall it in, to dig about it, to prune it, and the like. It is much more highly esteemed than one of the trees of the forest; they are despised in comparison with it. And if it bear fruit, it is indeed much preferable to other trees; for the fruit of it yields a noble liquor; as it is said in Jotham's parable, Judg. ix. 13. "And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheareth God and man?"—But if it bear no fruit, it is more unprofitable than the trees of the forest; for the wood of them is good for timber; but the wood of the vine is fit for no work; as in the text, "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?"—The only thing for which a vine is useful, in case of barrenness, is for fuel: "Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel." It is wholly consumed; no part of it is worth a saving, to make any instrument of it, for any work.

Doctrine. If men bring forth no fruit to God, they are wholly useless, unless in their destruction.

For the proof of this doctrine, I shall show,

1. That there can be but two ways in which man can be useful, viz, either in *acting*, or in *being acted upon*.

2. That man can no otherwise be useful *actively* than by bringing forth fruit to God.

3. That if he bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which he can be *passively* useful, but in being destroyed.

4. In that way he may be useful without bearing fruit.

I. There are but two ways in which man can be useful, viz. either in *acting* or being *acted upon.* If man be useful, he must be so either actively or passively; there is no medium. What can be more plain, than that if a man do nothing himself, and nothing be done with him or upon him by any other, he cannot be any way at all useful?—If man do nothing himself to promote the end of his existence, and no other being do any thing with him to promote this end, then nothing will be done to promote this end; and so man must be wholly useless. So that there are but two ways in which man can be useful to any purpose, viz. either actively or passively, either in doing something himself, or in being the subject of something done to him.

II. Man cannot be useful *actively*, any otherwise than in bringing forth fruit to God; serving God and living to his glory. This is the only way wherein he can be useful in doing; and that for this *reason*, that the glory of God is the very thing for which man was made, and to which all other ends are subordinate. Man is not an independent being, but he derives his being from another; and therefore hath his end assigned him by that other: and he who gave him his being made him for the end now mentioned. This was the very design and aim of the Author of man, this was the work for which he made him, viz. to serve and glorify his Maker.—Other creatures, that are inferior, were made for inferior purposes. But man is the highest, and nearest to God, of any in this lower world; and therefore his business is with God, although other creatures are made for lower ends. There may be observed a kind of gradual ascent, in the order of different creatures, from the meanest clod of earth to man, who hath a rational and immortal soul. A plant, an herb, or tree, is superior in nature to a stone or clod, because it hath a vegetable life. The brute creatures are a degree higher still; for they have sensitive life. But man, having a rational soul, is the highest of this lower creation, and is next to God; therefore his business is with God.

Things without life, as earth, water, &c. are subservient to things above them, as the grass, herbs, and trees. These vegetables are subservient to that order of creatures which is next above them, the brute creation; they are for food to them. Brute-creatures, again, are made for the use and ser-

vice of the order above them; they are made for the service of mankind. But man being the highest of this lower creation the next step from him is to God. He therefore is made for the service and glory of God. This is the whole work and business of man; it is his highest end, to which all other ends are subordinate.

If it had not been for this end, there never would have been any such creature; there would have been no occasion for it. Other inferior ends may be answered as well, without any such creature as man. There would have been no sort of occasion for making so noble a creature, and enduing him with such faculties, only to enjoy earthly good, to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy sensual things. Brute-creatures, without reason, are capable of these things, as well as man: yea, if no higher end be aimed at than to enjoy sensitive good reason is rather a hinderance than a help. It doth but render man the more capable of afflicting himself with care, fears of death, and other future evils; and of vexing himself with many anxieties, from which brute-creatures are wholly free, and therefore can gratify their senses with less molestation. Besides, reason doth but make men more capable of molesting and impeding one another in the gratification of their senses. If man have no other end to seek but to gratify his senses, reason is nothing but an impediment.

Therefore if man be not made to serve and glorify his Creator, it is wholly to no purpose that such a creature is made. Doubtless then, the all-wise God, who doth all things in infinite wisdom, hath made man for this end. And this is agreeable to what he hath taught us in many places in the scriptures. This is the great end for which man was made, and for which he was made such a creature, having bodily senses and rational powers. For this is he placed in such circumstances, and the earth is given him for a possession. For this he hath dominion given him over the rest of the terrestrial creatures. For this the sun shines and the rain falls on him, and the moon and stars are for signs and seasons to him, and the earth yields him her increase.—All other ends of man are subordinate to this. There are indeed inferior ends for which man was made. Men were made for one another; for their friends and neighbours, and for the good of the public. But all these inferior ends are designed to be subordinate to the higher end of glorifying God; and therefore man cannot be actively useful otherwise than by actively bringing forth fruit to God. Because, that is not actively useful which doth not actively an-

swer its end: that which doth not *answer its end* is in vain; for that is the meaning of the proposition, that any thing *is in vain*. So that which doth not actively answer its end, is as to its own activity in vain.

That, as to its own activity, is altogether useless, which actively answers only subordinate ends, without answering the ultimate end; because the latter is the end of subordinate ones. Subordinate ends are to no purpose, only as they stand related to the highest end. Therefore these inferior ends are good for nothing, though they be obtained, unless they also obtain *their* end. Inferior ends are not aimed at for their *own* sake, but only for the sake of that which is ultimate. Therefore he that fails of this, is as much to no purpose, as if he did not obtain his subordinate end.

I will illustrate this by two or three examples. The subordinate end of the underpinning of a house, is to support it, and the subordinate end of the windows, is to let in the light. But the ultimate end of the whole, is the benefit of the inhabitants. Therefore, if the house be never inhabited, the whole is in vain. The underpinning is in vain, though it be ever so strong, and support the building ever so well. The windows also are wholly in vain, though they be ever so large and clear, and though they obtain the subordinate end of letting in the light: they are as much in vain, as if they let in no light.

So the subordinate end of the husbandman in ploughing and sowing, and well manuring his field is, that it may bring forth a crop. But his more ultimate end is, that food may be provided for him and his family. Therefore though his inferior end be obtained, and his field bring forth ever so good a crop, yet if after all it be consumed by fire, or otherwise destroyed, he ploughed and sowed his field as much in vain, as if the seed had never sprung up.—So if man obtain his subordinate ends every so fully; yet if he altogether fail of his ultimate end, he is wholly an useless creature. Thus if men be very useful in temporal things to their families, or greatly promote the temporal interest of the neighbourhood, or of the public; yet if no glory be brought to God by it he is altogether useless. If men actively bring no glory to God, they are as to their own activity, altogether useless, how much soever they may promote the benefit of one another. How much soever one part of mankind may subserve another; yet if the end of the whole be not answered, every part is useless.

Thus if the parts of a clock subserve ever so well one another, mutually to assist each other in their motions; one wheel moving another ever so regularly; yet if the motion never reach the hand or the hammer, it is altogether in vain, as much as if it stood still. So one man was made to be useful to another, and one part of mankind to another; but the use of the whole is to bring glory to God the maker, or else all is in vain.

Although a wicked man may, by being serviceable to good men, do what will be an advantage to them to their bringing forth fruit to God; yet that serviceableness is not what he *aims* at; he doth not look so far for an ultimate end. And however this be obtained, no thanks are due to him: he is only the *occasion*, and not the *designing* cause of it.

The usefulness of such a man, being not designed, is not to be attributed to him, as though it were *his* fruit. He is not useful *as a man*, or as a rational creature, because he is not so designedly. He is useful as things without life may be. Things without life may be useful to put the godly under advantages to bring forth fruit, as the timber and stones with which his house is built, the wool and flax with which he is clothed; but the fruit which is brought forth to God's glory, cannot be said to be the fruit of these lifeless things, but of the godly man who makes use of them. So it is when wicked men put the godly under advantages to glorify God, as Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, and others have done.

III. If men bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which they can be useful *passively*, but in being destroyed. They are fit for nothing else.

1. They are not fit to be suffered to continue *always in this world*. It is not fit that this world should be the constant abode of those who bring forth no fruit to God. It is not fit that the barren tree should be allowed always to stand in the vineyard. The husbandman lets it stand for a while, till he digs about it, dungs it, and proves it to be incurable, or till a convenient time to cut it down come; but it is not fit that they who bring forth no fruit to God, should be suffered to live always in a world which is so full of the divine goodness, or that his goodness should be spent upon them for ever.—This world, though fallen, and under a curse, has many streams of divine goodness. But it is not fit that those who bring forth no fruit to God, should always be continued in partaking of these streams. There are three different states; one, wherein is nothing but good, which is heaven; another, wherein is a mix-

ture of good and evil, which is the earthly state; and the third wherein is nothing but evil, which is the state of eternal destruction. Now they that bring forth no fruit to God, are not fit for either of the former.

It is not fit that an unprofitable, unfruitful creature, who will not glorify his Creator, should always live here to consume the fruits of divine bounty; to have the good things of this life spent upon him in vain. While a man lives here, the other creatures are subjected to him. The brute creatures serve him with their labour and with their lives. The sun, moon, and stars; the clouds, fields, and trees, all serve him. But why should God always keep his creatures in subjection to that man, who will not be subject to him? Why should the creation be always kept in such bondage, as to be subject to wicked men? The creatures indeed are made subject to vanity, God hath subjected them to wicked men, and given them for their use. This however he would not have done but as it is only for a little while; and the creatures can bear it through the hope of approaching deliverance; otherwise it would have been intolerable. Rom. viii. 20. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same *in hope*."—The creature, as it were, groans by reason of this subjection to wicked men, although it be but for a while, v. 22. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." Therefore surely it would be no way fit that wicked men, who do no good, and bring forth no fruit to God, should live here always, to have the various creatures subservient to them, as they are now. The earth can scarcely bear wicked men during that short time for which they stay here. It is no way fit, therefore, that it should be forced to bear them always.

Men who bring forth no fruit to God are cumberers of the ground. Luke xiii. 7. And it is not meet that they should be suffered to cumber the ground *always*. God cannot be glorified in this way of disposing of unfruitful persons. If such men should be suffered to live always in such a state as this, it would be so far from being to the glory of God, that it would be to the disparagement of his *wisdom* to continue them in a state so unsuitable for them. It would also be a disparagement to his *justice*; for this is a world where "all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." If there were no other state but this for wicked men, justice could not possibly take place,

It would also reflect upon the *holiness* of God. For ever to uphold this world for an habitation of such persons, and for ever to continue the communications of his bounty and goodness to them, would appear as though he were disposed to countenance and encourage wickedness.

2. If men do not bring forth fruit to God, they are not fit to be disposed of *in heaven*. Heaven, above all others, is the most improper place for them. Every thing appertaining to that state is unsuitable for them. The *company* is most unsuitable. The original inhabitants of that world are the angels. But what a disagreeable union would that be, to unite wicked men and angels in the same society? The *employments* of that world are unsuitable. The employments are serving and glorifying God. How unsuitable then would it be to plant barren trees in that heavenly paradise, trees that would bring forth no fruit to the divine glory? The *enjoyments* of heaven are unsuitable. The enjoyments are holy and spiritual, the happiness of beholding the glory of God, and praising his name, and the like. But these enjoyments are as unsuitable as can be to the carnal earthly minds of wicked men. They would be no enjoyments to them; but on the contrary would be most disagreeable, and what they cannot relish, but entirely nauseate. The *design* of heaven is unsuitable to them. The design of God in making heaven was, that it might be a place of holy habitation, for the reward of the righteous, and not an habitation for the wicked. It would greatly reflect on the wisdom of God to dispose of wicked men there; for it would be the greatest confusion. But God is not the author of confusion, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. It would be contrary to the holiness of God, to take wicked men so near to himself, into his glorious presence, to dwell for ever in the part of that creation which is, as it were, his own palace, and to sit at his table. We read in Psal. v. 4. "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee." Therefore it would be impossible that the end of the existence of wicked men should be answered by placing them in heaven.

IV. Men who bring forth no fruit to God, may yet in suffering destruction be useful. Although they be not useful by any thing they do; yet they may be useful in what they may suffer; just as a barren tree, which is no way useful standing in the vineyard, may be good fuel. God can find use for the most wicked men: he hath his use for vessels of wrath as well

as for vessels of mercy: 2 Tim. ii. 20. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour:" Prov. xvi. 4. "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." I shall briefly take notice of some ends which God accomplishes by it.

1. Unfruitful persons are of use in their destruction for the glory of God's *justice*. The vindictive justice of God is a glorious attribute, as well as his mercy; and the glory of this attribute appears in the everlasting destruction and ruin of the barren and unfruitful.—The glory of divine justice in the perdition of ungodly men, appears wonderful and glorious in the eyes of the saints and angels in heaven. Hence we have an account, that they sing praises to God, and extol his justice at the sight of the awful judgments which he inflicts on wicked men: Rev. xvi. 5, 6. "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast judged thus: for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy:" And Rev. xix. 1, 2. "And after these things I heard a great voice, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

2. Unfruitful persons in their destruction are of use for God to glorify his *majesty* upon them. The awful majesty of God remarkably appears in those dreadful and amazing punishments which he inflicts on those who rise up against him. A sense of the majesty of an earthly prince is supported very much by a sense of its being a dreadful thing to affront him. God glorifies his own majesty in the destruction of wicked men; and herein he appears infinitely great, in that it appears to be an infinitely dreadful thing to offend him. How awful doth the majesty of God appear in the dreadfulness of his anger! This we may learn to be one end of the damnation of the wicked, from Rom. ix. 22. "What if God, willing to show the wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" This is a part of his majesty and glory. God tells Pharaoh, that for this cause he raised him up, that he might show his power in him, and that his name might be declared through all the earth, in his destruction, Exod. ix. 15, 16.; and again, chap. xiv. 17. "I will get me honour upon Pharaoh,

and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

3. The destruction of the unfruitful is of use, to give the saints a *greater sense* of their happiness, and of God's grace to them. The wicked will be destroyed and tormented in the view of the saints, and other inhabitants of heaven. This we are taught in Rev. xiv. 10. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of his holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And in Isa. lxvi. 24. "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." When the saints in heaven shall look upon the damned in hell, it will serve to give them a greater sense of their own happiness. When they shall see how dreadful the anger of God is, it will make them the more prize his love. They will rejoice the more, that they are not the objects of God's anger, but of his favour; that they are not the subjects of his dreadful wrath, but are treated as his children, to dwell in the everlasting embraces of his love. The misery of the damned, will give them a greater sense of the distinguishing grace and love of God to them, that he should from all eternity set his love on them, and make so great a difference between them and others who are of the same species, and have deserved no worse of God than they. What a great sense will this give them of the wonderful grace of God to them! and how will it heighten their praises! with how much greater admiration and exultation of soul will they sing of the free and sovereign grace of God to them!

When they shall look upon the damned, and see their misery, how will heaven ring with the praises of God's justice towards the wicked, and his grace towards the saints! And with how much greater enlargement of heart will they praise Jesus Christ, their Redeemer, that ever he was pleased to set his love upon them, his dying love! and that he should so distinguish them as to shed his blood, and make his soul an offering to redeem them from that misery, and to bring them to such happiness! With what love and ecstacy will they sing that song in Rev. v. 9, 10. "Thou art worthy: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tongue, and kindred, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." One end, which the

apostle mentions, why God appointed vessels of wrath, is the more to make known the wonderfulness of his mercy towards the saints. In Rom. ix. 22, 23. there are two ends mentioned: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" That is one end; another is mentioned immediately after: "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?"

APPLICATION.

I. Hence we may learn, how just and righteous God is in the destruction of those who bring forth no fruit to him. Seeing there is no other way in which the end of their being can be obtained, certainly it is most just that God should thus dispose of them. Why should he be frustrated of his end through their perverseness? If men will not do the work for which he hath made and fitted them; if they, through a spirit of opposition and rebellion, refuse; why should God suffer himself to be disappointed of his end in making them? It doth not become his infinite greatness and majesty to suffer himself to be frustrated by the wickedness and perverseness of sinful worms of the dust. If God should suffer this, it would seem to argue, either a want of wisdom to fix upon a good end, or a want of power to accomplish it.—God made all men that they might be useful; and if they will not be useful in their conduct and actions, how just is it that God should make them useful in their sufferings! He made all men for his own glory; and if they, contrary to the revealed will of God, refuse to glorify him actively and willingly, how just is it that God should glorify himself upon them!

Men are under no natural necessity of being put to this use of glorifying God in their sufferings. God gives them opportunity of glorifying him in bringing forth fruit, puts them under advantages for it, and uses many means to bring them to it. But if they will not be useful this way, it is very just that God should make them useful in the only remaining way in which they can be useful, viz. in their destruction. God is not forward to put them to this use. He tells us, that he hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live;" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He represents the destruction of sinners as a work to which he is

backward; yet it is meet that they should be destroyed, rather than that they should be suffered to frustrate the end of their being. Who can blame the husbandman for cutting down and burning a barren tree, after he hath digged about it, and dunged it, and used all proper means to make it fruitful?—Let those among us consider this, who have lived all their lives hitherto unprofitably, and never have brought forth any fruit to God's glory, notwithstanding all the means that have been used with them. Consider how just it would be if God should utterly destroy you, and glorify himself upon you in that way; and what a wonderful patience it is, that God hath not done it before now.

II. This subject ought to put you upon examining yourselves, whether you be not wholly useless creatures. You have now heard, that those who bring forth no fruit to God, are, as to any good they do, wholly useless. Inquire, therefore, whether you have ever done any thing from a gracious respect to God, or out of love to him? Seeking only your worldly interest, or for you to come to public worship on the Sabbath, to pray in your families, and other such things, merely in compliance with the general custom—or that you be sober, moral, and religious, only to be seen of men, or out of respect to your own credit and honour—is not bringing forth fruit to God. How is that for God which is only for the sake of custom, the esteem of men, or merely from the fear of hell? What thanks are due to you for not loving your own misery, and for being willing to take some pains to escape burning in hell to all eternity? There is not a devil in hell, but would do the same: Hos. x. 1. "Israel is an *empty* vine; he bringeth forth fruit *unto himself*."

There is no fruit brought forth to God, where there is nothing done from love, or true respect to him. God looketh at the heart. He doth not stand in need of our services, neither is he benefited by any thing that we can do. He doth not receive any thing of us, but only as a suitable testimony of our love and respect to him. This is the fruit that he seeks. Men themselves will not accept of those shows of friendship, which they think are hypocritical, and come not from the heart. How much less should God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men! John iv. 23. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in the spirit and in truth."—Inquire, therefore, whether you ever did the least thing out love to God? Have you not done all

for yourselves? Zech. vii. 5, 6. "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? And when ye did eat, and when we did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"

III. Another use of this subject may be of *conviction* and *humiliation* to those who never have brought forth any fruit to God. If, upon examination, you find that you have never in all your lives done any thing out of a true respect to God, then it hath been demonstrated, that, as to any thing which you do, you are altogether useless creatures. And consider, what a shameful thing it is for such rational beings as you are, and placed under such advantages for usefulness, yet to be wholly useless, and to live in the world to no purpose! We esteem it a very mean character in any person, that he is worthless and insignificant; and to be called so is taken as a great reproach. But consider seriously, whether you can clear yourselves of this character. Set reason to work; can you rationally suppose, that you do in any measure answer the end for which God gave you your being, and made you of a nature superior to the beasts?—But that you may be sensible what cause you have to be ashamed of your unprofitableness, consider the following things:

1. How much God hath *bestowed* upon you, in the endowments of your nature. God hath made you rational, intelligent creatures, hath endued you with noble powers, those endowments wherein the natural image of God consists. You are vastly exalted in your nature above other kinds of creatures here below. You are capable of a thousand times as much as any of the brute-creatures. He hath given you a power of understanding, which is capable of extending itself, of looking back to the beginning of time, and of considering what was before the world, and of looking forward beyond the end of time. It is capable of extending beyond the utmost limits of the universe; and is a faculty whereby you are akin to angels, and are capable even of knowing and contemplating the divine Being, and his glorious perfections, manifested in his works and in his word. You have souls capable of being the habitation of the Holy Spirit of God, and his divine grace. You are capable of the noble employments of angels. How lamentable and shameful is it, that such a creature should be altogether useless, and live in vain! How lamentable that such a noble and excellent piece of divine workmanship should

fail of its end, and be to no purpose! Was it ever worth while for God to make you such a creature, with such a noble nature, and so much above other kinds of creatures, only to eat, and drink, and gratify your sensual appetites? How lamentable and shameful to you, that such a noble tree should be more useless than any tree of the forest; that man, whom God hath thus set in honour, should make himself more worthless than the beasts that perish!

2. How much God hath *done for you* in the *creation* of the world. He made the earth, and seas, and all their fullness, for the use of man, Psal. cxv. 16. "The earth hath he given to the children of men." He made the vast variety of creatures for man's use and service: Gen. i. 28. "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." For the same purpose he made all the plants, and herbs, and trees of the field: Gen. i. 29. "I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." He made the sun in the heavens, that glorious luminary, that wonderful globe of light, to give light to man, and to constitute the difference between day and night. He also made the moon, and the vast multitude of stars, to be to him *signs and seasons*. What great provision hath God made for man! What a vast variety of good things for food and convenience, to put him under advantages to be useful! How lamentable is it, then, that after all these things he should be an useless creature!

3. How much is done for you in the course of God's *common providence*! Consider how nature is continually labouring for you. The sun is, as it were, in a ferment for mankind, and spending his rays upon man to put him under advantage to be useful. The winds and clouds are continually labouring for you, and the waters are going in a constant circulation, ascending in the air from the seas, descending in rain, gathering in streams and rivers, returning to the sea, and again ascending and descending, for you. The earth is continually labouring to bring forth her fruit for your support. The trees of the field, and many of the poor brute-creatures, are continually labouring and spending their strength for you! How much of the fulness of the earth is spent upon you! How many of God's creatures are devoured by you! How many of the lives of the living creatures of God are destroyed for your sake, for your support and comfort!—Now, how lamentable

will it be, if, after all, you be altogether useless, and live to no purpose! What mere cumberers of the ground will you be! Luke xiii. 7. Nature, which thus continually labours for you, will be burdened with you. This seems to be what the apostle means, Rom. viii. 20, 21, 22. where he tells us, that the creation is made subject to vanity, and brought into the bondage of corruption; and that the whole creation groans, and travails in pain, under this bondage.

4. How much is done for you in the use of the *means of grace.* How much hath God done to provide you with suitable means and advantages for usefulness! How many prophets hath he sent into the world, in different ages, inspiring them with his holy spirit, and enabling them to work many miracles to confirm their word, whereby you now have his written word to instruct you! How great a thing hath God done for you, to give you opportunity and advantage to be useful, in that he hath sent his own Son into the world! He who is really and truly God, united himself to the human nature, and became man, to be a prophet and teacher to you and other sinners. Yea, he laid down his life to make atonement for sin, that you might have encouragement to serve God with hopes of acceptance.—How many ordinances have been instituted for you! How much of the labour of the ministers of God hath been spent upon you! Is not that true concerning you which is said (Isa. v.) of the vineyard planted in a very fruitful hill, and fenced and cultivated with peculiar care and pains, which yet proved unfruitful? How much hath the dresser of the vineyard digged about the barren tree, and dunged it, and yet it remains barren!

5. Consider what a shame it is that you should live in vain, when all the *other creatures*, inferior to you, glorify their Creator, according to their nature. You who are so highly exalted in the world, are more useless than the brute-creation; yea, than the meanest worms, or things without life, as earth and stones: For they all answer their end; none of them fail of it. They are all useful in their places, all render their proper tribute of praise to their Creator: while you are mere nuisances in the creation, and burdens to the earth; as any tree of the forest is more useful than the vine, if it bear not fruit.

IV. Let me, in a farther application of this doctrine, *exhort* you by all means to bring forth fruit to God. Let it be your constant endeavour to be in this way actively useful in the world.——Here consider three things.

1. What an *honour* it will be to such poor creatures as you are to bring forth fruit to the divine glory. What is such a poor worm as man, that he should be enabled to bring forth any fruit to God! It is the greatest honour of his nature, that God hath given him a capacity of glorifying the great Creator. There is no creature in the visible world that is capable of actively glorifying God, but man.

2. In bringing forth fruit to God, you will be so *profitable* to none as to *yourselves*. You cannot thereby be profitable to God; Job xxii. 2. "Can a man be profitable to God?" And though thereby you may be profitable to your fellow-creatures: yet the fruit which you bring forth to God will be a greater benefit to yourselves than to any one living.—Although you are under a natural obligation to bring forth fruit to God, yet he will richly reward you for it. In requiring you to bring forth fruit to to him, he doth but require you to bring forth fruit to your own happiness. You will taste the sweetness of your own fruit. It will be most profitable for you in this world, and the pleasure will be beyond the labour. Beside this, God hath promised to such a life, everlasting rewards, unspeakable, infinite benefits. So that by it you will infinitely advance your own interest.

3. If you remain thus unprofitable, and be not actively useful, surely God will obtain his end of you, in your *destruction*. He will say concerning the barren tree, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Christ, John, xv. 6. tells us, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This is spoken of the barren branches in the vine. How would you yourselves do in such a case with a barren tree in an orchard, or with weeds and tares in your fields? Doubtless, if it were in your power, you would utterly destroy them.—God will have his end; he will not be frustrated. Though all men and devils unite their endeavours, they cannot frustrate God in any thing; and "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished;" Prov. xi. 21. God hath sworn by his great name, that he will have his glory of men, whether they will actively glorify him or no. Numb. xiv. 21, 22, 23. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory,

and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it."—"The ax lieth at the root of the trees; and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire;" Matth. iii. 10. The end of those men who bring forth nothing but briers and thorns, is to be burned, as in Heb. vi. 7, 8. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." So we read of the tares, Matth. xiii. 30. "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them;" and in verse 40, 41, 42. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."—So it is said of the chaff, Matth. iii. 12. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

If you continue not to bring forth any fruit to the divine glory, hell will be the only fit place for you. It is a place prepared on purpose to be a receptacle of such persons. In hell nature ceases to labour any more for sinners. There they will have no opportunity to consume the fruits of divine goodness on their lusts; there they can prejudice or incumber nothing, upon which God sets any value. There no faithful servants and ministers of God will any longer spend their strength in vain upon them. When the barren tree is in the fire, the servants of the husbandman are freed from any further labour about it.—In hell the fruitless will no more have opportunity to clog and discourage the flourishing of religion, and to destroy much good, as they often do in this world; they will no more have opportunity to corrupt others by their ill example; they will no more have it in their power to offend the godly; they may hurt and torment one

another; but the godly will be out of their reach. In hell there will be no ordinances, no Sabbaths, no sacraments, no sacred things, for them to profane and defile by their careless and hypocritical attendance; but unceasing woe for their abuse.

END OF THE SIXTH VOLUME.

Edward Baines, Printer, Leeds.

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